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The
MOUNTAIN PATH

Aradhana Issue 1995

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

— *The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 1

June 1995

Aradhana Issue

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Sketches of Sri Bhagavan, Sri Ramakrishna, Padre Pio, Wordsworth and on Kashi by Maniam Selven

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— Editor.

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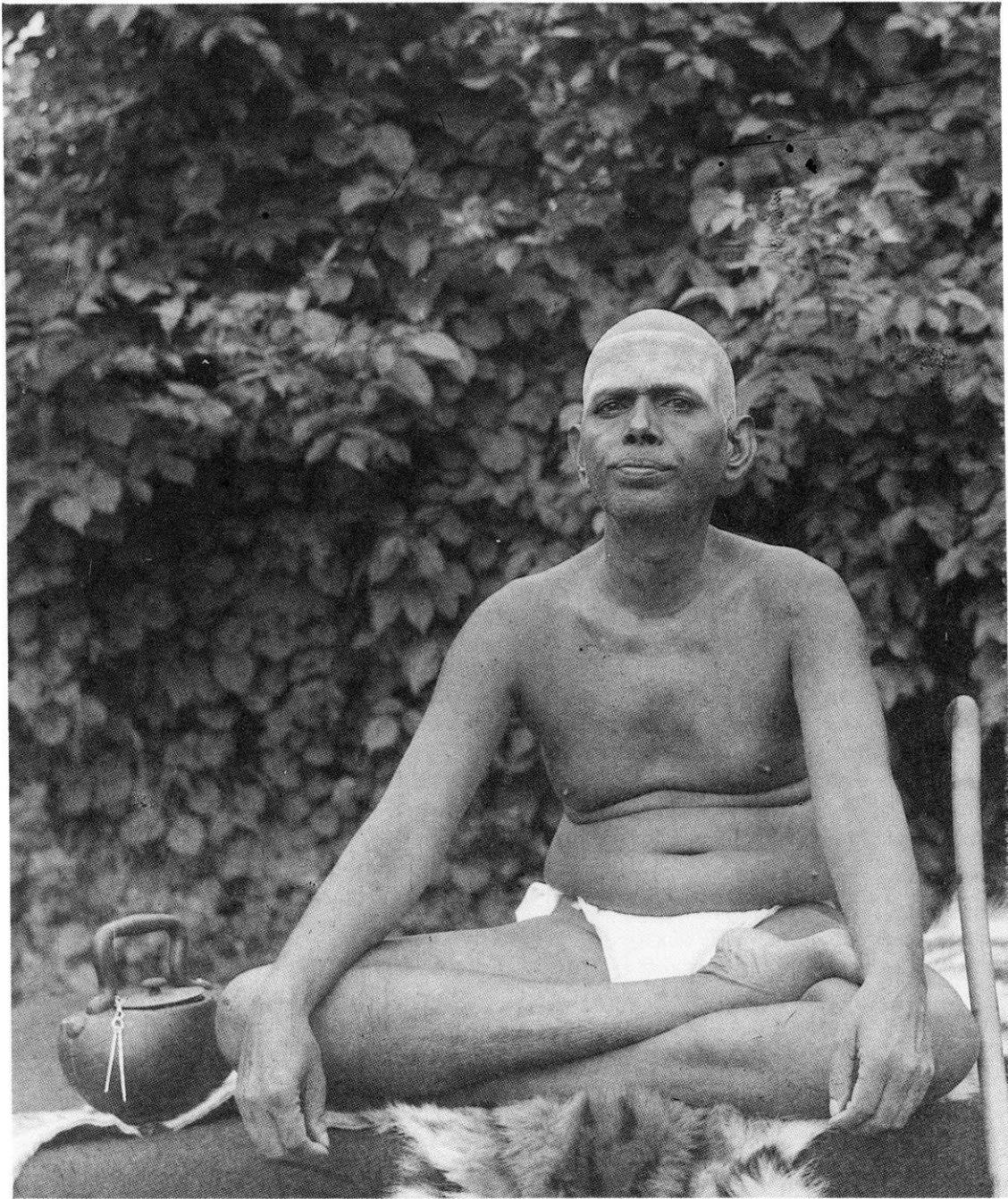
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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



EDITORIAL

Learning And Liberation

LIFE is an inevitably repetitive process involving continuous and varied activity, and the meaning of the whole thing remains an enigma up to a point of time. It looks like a blind dance of gross material forces. At a certain point, however, one begins to recognise the existence of a non-material, intelligent principle behind this maze of activity, which acts not as a mere backdrop but the driving force. This is the dawn of faith in the divine principle or God. Arising primarily as a result of the inner spark of wisdom latent in everyone, it is strengthened further by such factors as family tradition, upbringing and environment. Starting with such rudiments of faith one goes on to further stages in religious life.

Book-mindedness is a natural development in religious pursuit and a wide range of interesting material relating to various branches like cosmogony, metaphysics and theology is available for study. There is an insatiable thirst for knowledge and it looks as though the greater the number of books one studies, the nearer one is to the goal.

But the problem is that when one goes deep into such studies, contradictions seem to arise. When widely differing theories are offered on

the same subject one is apt to get confused, hardly knowing which of them represents the correct position. Several doubts arise. For example, which among the theories of creation is correct? What is the merit of book learning and what is the limit to it? Why do doubts arise? Can one get the ultimate enlightenment from books alone? What is salvation? Which is the best path to salvation or realisation, and why? These are typical and by no means hypothetical questions. The list is not exhaustive either. Only the sages who have realised the ultimate truth themselves can provide satisfactory replies to such questions.

Sri Ramana Maharshi's reply to a question on creation illustrates his unique way of reconciling controversies. The questioner was puzzled by Vedic statements giving apparently conflicting accounts of cosmogony. Maharshi said, "Different seers saw different aspects of truth at different times, each emphasising some viewpoint. Why do you worry about their conflicting statements? The essential aim of the Vedas is to teach us the nature of the imperishable Self and show us that we are That."¹

¹ *The Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words*, p. 16 (1960 Edn.).

The following quotation from Sri Bhagavan brings out the limitations of book-learning:

All scriptures without any exception proclaim that for attaining Salvation the mind should be subdued; and once one knows that control of the mind is their final aim, it is futile to make an interminable study of them. What is required for such control is actual inquiry into oneself by self-interrogation: "Who am I?" How can this enquiry in quest of the Self be made merely by means of a study of the scriptures.²

Another saying of Sri Bhagavan drives home the same point:

The scriptures are useful to indicate the existence of the Higher Power (the Self) and the way to gain it. Their essence is that much only. When that is assimilated the rest is useless.³

Cautioning against unnecessary discussion and arguments on scriptures, Sri Ramakrishna says:

One wishing to take pure water from a shallow pond should not disturb it, but gently take it from the surface. If it is disturbed the sediment will rise and make the whole water muddy. So, if you desire to be pure, do not waste your energies in useless scriptural discussions and arguments, but slowly go on with your devotional practices. Failing this your little brain will become confused.⁴

Sai Baba of Shirdi once sharply remarked: "People hope to find *Brahma* in these books, but it is *bhrama* [confusion] not *Brahma* that they find there."⁵ Remarks of the Sufi master Sai Rochaldas Sahib in the matter are noteworthy. He says: "Yes, there is nothing lacking in the scriptures because these are the utterances arising out of the experiences of sages. Yet, they are mute. They are helpful up to a point and not beyond that. As soon as the right attitude is developed through the spiritual practices, the *jiva* gets all the light from within."⁶

Sri Bhagavan regards the doubter, or the one

who raises doubts, as more important than the doubts themselves. To a devotee who came out with the quote from Emerson, "Soul answers soul by itself—not by description or words," he replied: "Quite so. However much you learn, there will be no bounds to knowledge. You ignore the doubter but try to solve the doubts. On the other hand, hold on to the doubter and the doubts will disappear."⁷

A visitor once asked whether the study of books would reveal the truth. Sri Maharshi's reply was, "That will not suffice... *Samadhi* alone can reveal it. Thoughts cast a veil over Reality and so it cannot be clear in states other than *samadhi*."⁸

The whole aim of religious life is to get emancipated from the cycle of birth and death and attain a state of total freedom from all human limitations. Unless one is an exceptionally advanced seeker for whom hearing the truth even once is enough to get enlightenment, one should necessarily make preparatory effort in order to gain it. The need for spiritual discipline and effort is emphasised by Sri Ramakrishna, who says:

In the game of hide-and-seek, one must touch the 'granny' in order to be free. But the 'granny' is never pleased if she is touched at the very outset. It is God's wish that the play should continue for some time.

Then:

"Out of a hundred thousand kites, at best but one or two break free; And Thou dost laugh and clap Thy hands, Mother, watching them!"⁹

² *The Collected works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 40 (1959 Edn.).

³ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 70 (1994 Edn.).

⁴ *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 246, 1934 (Almora) Edn.

⁵ *Incredibly Sai Baba*, p. 112.

⁶ *Some Moments with the Master Sai Rochaldas Sahib* pp. 35-36.

⁷ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 190 (1994 Edn.).

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 187.

⁹ *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 358 (1947 Edn.).

Sri Ramana goes to the root of the matter and his explanation enables us to know the bare, simple truth that the mind is the sole cause of *samsara*. He says:

People think that freedom [*moksha*] is somewhat yonder and should be sought out. They are wrong. Freedom [*moksha*] is only knowing the Self within yourself. Concentrate and you will get it. Your mind is the cycle of births and deaths [*samsara*].¹⁰

In the brief dialogue quoted below, Sri Maharshi reveals the whole truth about *moksha* and also indicates the method of achieving it:

Devotee: What is *moksha* [liberation]?

Maharshi: *Moksha* is to know that you were not born. "Be still and know that I am God." To be still is not to think. *Know* and not *think* is the word.¹¹

One may progress on the spiritual path inch by inch, or by leaps and bounds. It is immaterial. The whole of spiritual life centres around practice. There is no short-cut or alternative to sustained *sadhana*. Learning serves the purpose of nurturing the right conviction and creating a proper base for *sadhana*. After this stage is reached one should not be bookish and get

caught in the cobwebs of theory. Learning is for liberation. Learning itself is not liberation. Sivaprakasam Pillai says:

Blessed be the Feet of the One [Sri Ramana] who teaches "control of mind is the gist of any book [teaching]. What book do you need to see yourself?"¹²

One may take to Self-enquiry, pure and simple, or other methods. One may choose to combine it (Self-enquiry) with other methods also. Howsoever one may proceed, one has eventually to face such enquiry. This is because 'I' is integral to existence and "Who am I?" is the most natural and inescapable of all questions.

One should pursue Self-enquiry with tenacity. Ultimately, the response to the question 'Who am I?' will be no ordinary response — certainly not a verbal one — but a mighty pull from within.

And, then, the question along with the questioner is dissolved in the limitless expanse of the Heart.

¹⁰ *Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 38 (1994 Edn.).

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 115.

¹² *Ramana Pada Malai*, verse 29.

In the "Crown-Gem of Discrimination" (*Vivekachudamani*) Sri Shankara has described *samadhi* or spiritual trance which is the limitless bliss of liberation, beyond doubt and duality, and at the same time indicated the means for its attainment. To attain this state of freedom from duality is the real purpose of life, and only he who has done so is a *jivanmukta*, liberated while yet alive, not one who has a mere theoretical understanding of what constitutes *purushartha* or the desired end and aim of human endeavour.

— from Sri Bhagavan's Introduction to *Vivekachudamani*.



Kashi Panchakam

(Five Verses on Kashi)

By Shankaracharya

Every devout Hindu hopes to visit Kashi (the modern Varanasi) at least once in his lifetime and bathe in the sacred Ganga. To die within the precincts of Kashi is said to confer liberation and hence many a devotee longs and prays for such an opportunity. Some choose to live in Kashi in their last days specifically for this purpose.

Shankara's purpose in these stanzas is to point out that all merits earned through external acts of purification or worship, such as bathing in sacred waters and visiting places of pilgrimage, are automatically derived on attainment of Self-knowledge.

1. The extinction of the mind [subsidence in the Self] symbolises Manikarnika¹, the holiest of the holy places of pilgrimage. The perennial flow of Self-knowledge symbolises the spotlessly pure Ganga. I am that Kashika², of the form of pure Knowledge.
2. The one supreme Self, of the form of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, upon which this universe of moving and stationary objects is projected as in a magic show and shines as a sport of the mind — that Kashika am I, of the form of pure Knowledge.
3. The Intellect whose sway extends over the five sheaths and which resides in every body is Bhavani [consort of Shiva]; the witness is Shiva, who is the indweller of all and is all-pervading. I am that Kashika, of the form of pure Knowledge.
4. Kashi [the effulgent Self] shines at Kashi [the city]. Kashi [the luminosity of the Self] illumines the whole Universe. He who knows that Kashi [the Self] has indeed attained Kashi [salvation]³.
5. The body is the Kashi-kshetra [place of pilgrimage]. The stream of [Self] Knowledge is Ganga, the Mother of the three worlds, who is all-pervading. Devotion and faith symbolise Gaya⁴. Meditation on the feet of the Guru symbolises Prayaga⁵.

The Lord of the Universe is that *Turiya*, the consciousness underlying the three states of wakefulness, dream and sleep, which is the inner Self and the witness to the mind of all beings. When all these reside in my body, what other place of pilgrimage can there be!

¹ The long waterfront at Kashi is lined by a number of bathing and cremation *ghats*. The most important among these is Manikarnika.

² Kashika is the same as Kashi.

³ Kashi has other meanings mentioned in this verse, in addition to the primary one — 'shining'.

⁴ Oblations offered to forefathers at Gaya are considered to be several times more efficacious than when done elsewhere.

⁵ Bathing here has a special effect.

SRI DAKSHINAMURTI

By SADHU ARUNACHALA

BHAGAVAN Sri Ramana Maharshi has often been compared to Sri Dakshinamurti, who sits silent under the banyan tree on the north slope of Arunachala and there is much ground for this comparison. Moreover, it is more than just a comparison; actually the two are identical, though their bodies may to us, who are bound by the limitations of time and space, seem different.

Sri Dakshinamurti has retreated to an inaccessible fastness, no longer to be reached by the humans, and we can only surmise that this was done because he found the world unworthy and unable to understand his silent instruction, whereas in the form of Sri Ramana he was always most accessible and explained to one and all the meaning of the silence; if they did not listen now, well, the seed would bear fruit on some future occasion. Nothing was ever wasted;

for him there was no time and so could be no disappointment.

Strangely enough Bhagavan (as we all used to call Sri Ramana) once found himself in the proximity of the Silent Guru. He had gone off on a ramble about the slopes of the Hill when he saw a very large banyan leaf lying in his path. So struck was he by this that he set off in search of the source. At length he came within sight of an abnormally large tree which he thought must be the one for which he was looking. But he could not reach it, his way was blocked by a wall of sheer rock; at the same time he was attacked by a swarm of wasps whose nest he had unwittingly disturbed; so, realising he was not in-



AND SRI RAMANA

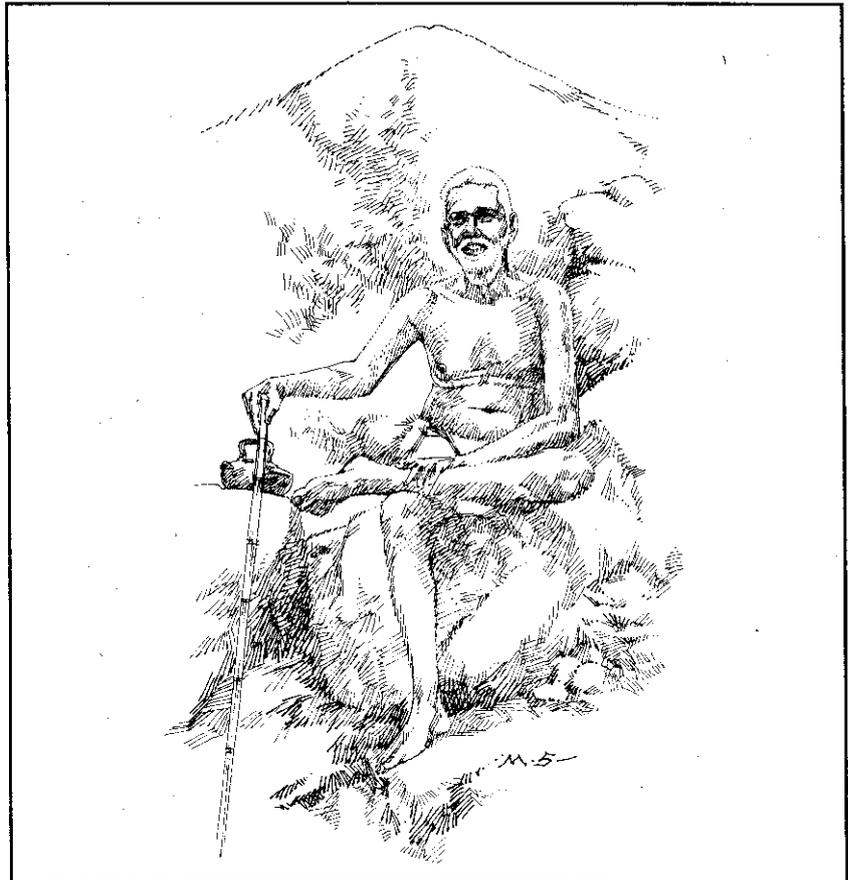
(A.W. CHADWICK)

tended to proceed, he returned. And ever after he discouraged his disciples who proposed to explore the Hill from going in quest of the same spot. "You will not succeed in any way," he would tell them. And though occasionally someone would ignore his advice, nobody ever did succeed in getting a glimpse of the enormous tree.

Both Sri Dakshinamurti and Sri Ramana taught exactly the same, a teaching that can be fully expounded in silence. Directly words are used we are in the realm of the relative and for Bhagavan there was no relative. It was only a fictitious appearance of Reality which is One (Advaita). "Make an effort to be without effort," he would say. In fact, don't do anything because actually there is nothing to do. The whole trouble with us all is this constant doing, associating ourselves with all sorts of actions and circumstances and so putting apparent limitations on the Illimitable. How can speech do more than point out to us our mistake! It can tell us only to "be", not to be this or to be that, because being this or that is back again

in the realm of limitation and it is just exactly here he is trying to make us understand that we are wrong.

And is there really any method of reaching that which is eternally and for ever here and now? Yes, I know Sri Ramana taught Self-enquiry. Find out who is this eternal and ever-conscious being you really are. The method of



"Who am I" in fact. But that was all. "Just be yourself," in other words, and to be yourself you must get behind phenomena to the Eternal Witness and this can only be done by Self-enquiry.

However, sometimes he would expound philosophy by the hour to clear the doubts of his many visitors, but always explained that this was actually quite unnecessary. There was only one thing to know and one to do. Silence was best. Once when he saw me puzzling over the intricate division and recombination of the elements in an *advaitic* treatise he had told me to read, he turned to someone sitting before him and said: "Tell him not to worry over all that; that is for those people who demand that sort of thing, who want an analytical explanation of everything. Let him read the rest which he can understand."

He has stated explicitly that he himself never at any time did any *sadhana*. "Sometimes I would sit with my eyes closed and sometimes with them open. I still do. But I know no *mantra* or yogic exercises and would not have any use for them if I did." And it is certain that he never taught any of these things. He told us how to set about Self-enquiry and advised certain rules of life that would facilitate this but that was all. He says in the little book *Who am I?*: "Regulation of diet, restricting it to *sattvic* food taken in moderate quantities, is of all rules of conduct the best and is most conducive to the development of *sattvic* qualities of the mind. These, in their turn, assist us in the practice of *Atma vichara* or enquiry in quest of the Self." For the mind is the product of the food we eat, he explained; purify the food and the mind automatically becomes pure. Again: "Likes and dislikes, love and hatred are equally to be eschewed. Nor is it proper to let the mind rest often on the affairs of worldly life. As far as possible one should not interfere in the affairs of others. Everything offered to others is really an offering to oneself; and if only this is realized, who is there that could refuse anything to others!" Let me quote once again: "If the ego rises all else will arise, if it subsides all else will also subside. The deeper the humility

with which we conduct ourselves the better for us. If only the mind is kept under control, what matters it where one may happen to be?"

It all sounds so simple put like this, and yet how many of us succeed? No question here of going off and taking *sannyasa*, for as he says: "Renunciation is not discarding external things, but the cancellation of the uprising ego." And this can quite possibly be done more effectively in the world and amidst family life. For to the determined seeker some opposition is surely good; it gives him something to work on and keeps him alert, just as the aeroplane needs the opposition of the air to hold it aloft.

He was always very definite in putting out that Liberation is not some far-off after-death experience, It is here and now for all of us always. Just drop the false association with limitation. Nothing new will happen. We shall then see that we have been all the time what we thought was something alien we were searching for. But he was no missionary trying to drive people along a definite track. Did he not know far better than us that everything had its proper time; there was no forcing it. A certain number of people were bound to come to him, and a few were able to remain permanently; it was just their karma. Once when a visitor was taking leave and with tears complained that he could not remain any longer, Bhagavan remarked in a very matter of fact way that if everybody who came remained, there would not be any room for anybody.

For people who believed in reforms and all sorts of charitable activity, his advice was: "First help yourself and then you may be able to help others. How can you possibly do any good to others when you yourself are still only seeking for the Good?" It is starting about it at the wrong end.

People who never came to him have often said that his was a negative philosophy. But this is only ignorance of the truth. He was a dynamic force himself and never advised the inaction of inertia. "Do, but do not associate yourself with

the doer. Be the witness always," was his message. Things will undoubtedly go on and as long as we imagine ourselves to be the body we will naturally believe that we perform the various activities ourselves. It is absolutely useless to sit back and say: "I am not the body, so there is no need to do anything," when this is only a catchphrase of intellectualism. We do not really believe it is true, so it is only hypocrisy. When we do actually know it, we shall never talk like that. For the real *sannyasin*, he has said, there is no difference between solitude and active life, as he does not regard himself as the doer in either case.

His message was for one and all, and nobody, whatever his occupation, need say that he has no time. For it is to be practised now and always, whatever we may be doing, working and resting, eating and sleeping.

At the end of *Catechism of Enquiry* it is said: "It is within our power to adopt a simple and nutritious diet and with earnest and incessant endeavour to eradicate the ego — the cause of all misery — by cancelling all mental activities born of the ego (i.e., the idea "I am the doer"). Can obsessing thought arise without the ego, and can there be illusion apart from such thought?"

And in these few words are summed up the whole of the teaching of the great Sage of Arunachala, who was in fact none other than Sri

Dakshinamurti in mortal form. And even now, though Sri Ramana has left his body, where is the difference? Does he not exactly come up to the definition of Sri Dakshinamurti as given by Sri Sundararaja Sarma in his commentary on the *slokas* of Sri Sankaracharya? Sri-Maya Shakti, Dakshin-perfect, Amurti-formless, or "the ever-perfect, formless power," as one might term it.

The first verse of the *Sri Dakshinamurti Stotra* by Sri Sankaracharya declares the same:

I bow to Sri Dakshinamurti in the form of my Guru; I bow to him by whose grace the whole world is found to exist entirely in the mind, like a city's image mirrored in a glass;

Though like a dream, through Maya's power it appears outside;

And by whose grace again, on the dawn of knowledge,

It is perceived as the everlasting and non-dual Self.

But of a truth the Self is one. When we have reached that state of knowledge, when we live in the Self alone and see the world for what it is, we too shall find that both Sri Dakshinamurti and Sri Ramana are and ever have been enthroned in our hearts. Let us pray earnestly that the dawn of that day may be near at hand.

From *The Call Divine*, January 1953

Relativity

CHUANG TZU AND THE BUTTERFLY

Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tzu, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly, and was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly, I awoke, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man.

Surrender

By Marie B. Byles

AS WE know, the usual way which Maharshi suggested to those who came to him for advice was meditating on the question, 'Who am I?', concentration on the root thought of 'I'. There were many who could not understand. In the following quotation from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* and in many other instances he suggested the opposite approach, not concentrating on 'I', but on the surrender of 'I':

If one surrenders oneself there will be none to ask questions or to be thought of. Either the thoughts are eliminated by holding on to the root thought 'I', or one surrenders oneself unconditionally to the Higher Power. These are the only two ways of realization.

I am venturing to set out some examples of actual experiences, for it is only by living Maharshi's teaching in experience that it can help us. Mere intellectual appreciation takes us nowhere.

Surrender to who or to what? Maharshi uses the term 'Higher Power'. But the name does not matter, and each must take the name that suits his training and understanding. If you prefer it, you can use Ishwara or Rama, Christ or God, or if a Buddhist, the Dhamma, That-which-is, or perhaps the Deathless Essence. What matters is faith in the essential rightness of what lies at the heart of things. The only proof of this is that it works. If you think you could run the universe better, Maharshi has no message for you. This preliminary faith is vital.

When unpleasant things happen, the natural reaction of the intellectual, energetic and hard-working person is to try to think out a solution. But thinking things out takes us only deeper into the morass. It inflates the ego as well, and cuts us off from our oneness with all. If we surrender, the Higher Power can draw us into that oneness and resolve the impasse. We must therefore start by looking beyond the things of this world and remembering only the Higher Power. It is not our puny brains that are running the universe—that is obvious. They can however dim the Light infinitesimally and thereby increase enormously our suffering. We may say that what comes is the result of past karma, or we may regard it as carrying with it a lesson we may learn. In either case it is not what comes that matters, it is how we take it—whether or not we surrender or kick against the pricks. Let us look at some examples with this in mind.

Is the weather not to our liking? The poor weather gets blamed for everything in my country. Our complaints do not alter it; they only make it more difficult to bear, whereas our surrender to things as they are makes it easier. This is merely common sense, but few take any notice of it.

A woman's only son had been killed in World War II. Of course, it left an aching void and she would not be comforted. A year later she was

From *Ramana Darsan*

still carrying around her misery and it surrounded her like a black pall. She would not surrender to facts she could not alter.

Another far older woman was living in an old people's home. She was crippled with arthritis and in constant pain. Radiant joy seemed to come into the room when she entered. I asked her how she kept so happy despite her suffering. She replied, 'I suppose it is because I have so much to be thankful for.' She had joyfully and unconditionally surrendered to the Higher Power.

Have we become ill? The natural thing is to worry as to what we should do to get well. We seek here, there and everywhere and try this, that and the other remedy, all to no avail. We do not stop to ask, 'How do I know that I am meant to get better?' Still less do we surrender the matter of recovery to that Higher Power.

We treat our body as if it were our self, our 'I'. In fact, if there is work to do and we are prepared to surrender our body, then if a healthy body is necessary, the right remedy will fall into our hands or the right doctor or other healer come, without our seeking. To the one who has surrendered it is amazing how these things just happen. But it may be that our ability to help mankind does not require a healthy body. It may be that like Maharshi we must suffer until death. A French teacher-friend was lame from childhood through some form of cancer, and she had many serious operations. She told me that she used to say to herself:

'If I have a bright pupil, I do not give her an easy exercise; it would be wasting her time; I give her a difficult one. But if I have a dull pupil I then give her an easy one. It would be wasting her time if I gave something too difficult. I like to think that I am a bright pupil in life's school.'

She has long since surrendered herself, and she is passing towards death with a bright and happy smiling face.

Success or failure, bodily or mental, are of no moment to the Higher Power. One of

Maharshi's disciples was very anxious to be assured of success in his progress towards realization. Maharshi said with amusement that he had not been promised success; the next thing that the disciple would ask for would be a bond assuring him of success, and that if success did not come he would start a law case.

When I was attacked and left with a broken skull, pain, giddiness and exhaustion, it was easy to see that all is the result of action and reaction, and that the 'accident' was the result of the working of that perfect Law, for I had reached the age when I must learn to be instead of to do. But it was not easy to surrender to the idea of never getting well again, and not easy to see it as an opportunity for learning unconditional surrender.

All individual desires, however elevated, and certainly the desire for good health, are the result of failures to surrender, and kicking against the pricks. As Marcus Aurelius said, 'Circumstances may be said to fit our part,' as each stone is part of the perfect mosaic. The individual life is important only in so far as it forms part of that perfect mosaic. The ceaselessly changing 'I' must pass away into the invisible whole.

And we must be prepared to surrender, not only ourselves, but all others also, and cease trying to order their lives even as we have ceased trying to order our own.

I heard of a very sick husband who repeatedly complained, 'But my wife is the weak one and now she is doing all the work and it is far beyond her strength.' It was a very natural complaint (and I have often been guilty of complaining likewise) but in effect it amounted to complaining that the Higher Power was managing things very badly and that he himself could manage them much better. It was the result of natural affection but it was a trifle blasphemous if you stopped to think about it!

All desires, whether for ourselves or for others, springing from the individual 'I' prevent that conditional surrender. We cannot compare

one desire with another; all are fatal. For me the worst desire has been to be restored to health. But Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi suffered much and died comparatively young. Jesus was crucified and Gandhi was shot. The Buddha lived to a ripe old age with 45 years of active teaching when he died at peace with the world and with himself. Why the differences? We do not know. And all we need to do is to follow their examples of unconditional surrender, so that we too are one with the cosmic harmony.

In Edwin Arnold's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* there is a passage in which Krishna tells Arjuna to bring all to him, and that if he had nothing else, then to bring his failures. A friend and I found that we had both regarded this passage as the cream of the poem, for we had only failures to lay at the feet of the Lord. Alas! when we came to look up other translations, we found in them that nothing was said about failures! None the less, we both continued to believe that Edwin Arnold expressed what is fact. Too often amid our endeavours to surrender we see around us pleasant people who have apparently found good health, inner peace and

satisfaction generally, and when they give us gentle little lectures about our failures, we get a horribly guilty feeling—we are 'thinking negatively,' they tell us, and so on and so forth. Who or what is it that gets the guilty feeling? Only the changing 'I'. And 'who am I?'

About 20 or 30 years ago a ticket inspector suspected me of trying to defraud the N.S.W. government railways. I had been brought up with the idea of absolute integrity, and as my father was a principal officer on the railways, these came foremost on the list to be treated with irreproachable honesty. I was horrified at the suspicion. The friend who was with me said, 'What is hurt? Only our egos.' That should have been a lesson for ever. But it was not. Whenever we are hurt, we find it is only the non-existent 'I', the maker of all our suffering.

Therefore when we meet those well-meaning people who reproach us because we are in bad shape mentally or physically, let us remember that we have surrendered this 'I' to the Higher Power which takes no account of success or failure.

Where is Ramana?

It was in the early days of the Ashram. A visitor who had just arrived from a distant town went about from place to place eagerly enquiring, "Where is Ramana?" At last he heard that Bhagavan was in the kitchen and to the kitchen he hurried. Here four or five persons were found standing and the visitor could not make out which of them was the Sage. He singled out the simplest-looking person in the group—it happened to be Bhagavan himself—and asked him in a whisper, "Where is Ramana?" The person promptly pointed to a big cooking vessel and asserted with a smile, "There is Ramana!" As the others laughed and the visitor started, Bhagavan explained, "The name RAMANA is carved on that vessel, not on this body."

Who Can Be A Teacher?

(From the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna)

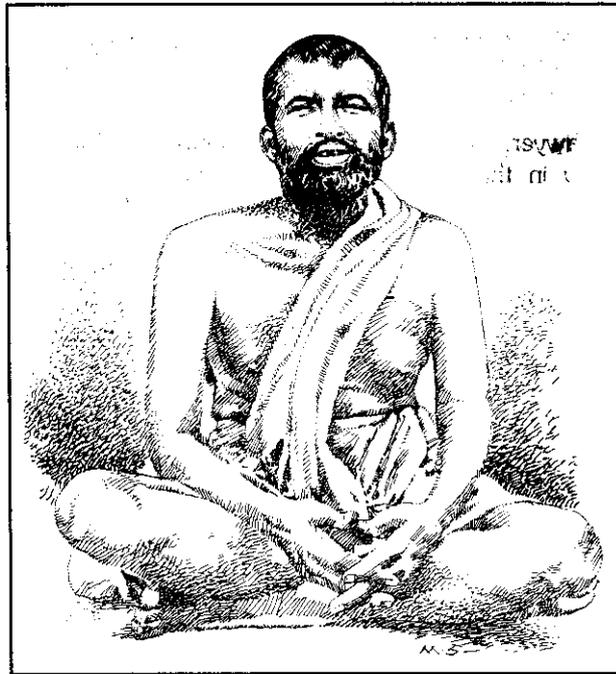
ONCE upon a time a learned *brahmana* went up to a wise king and said: "I am well versed, O king, in the holy scriptures. I have come here to teach you the holy book of *Bhagavata*." The king knew well that a man who has truly read the *Bhagavata* would be more desirous of realising his own Self than of gaining honour and wealth in a king's court. So he replied, "I see, O *brahmana*, that you yourself have not mastered the book thoroughly. I promise to make you my tutor, but go first and learn the scripture well." The *brahmana* went his way, thinking within himself, "How foolish was the king to say I had not mastered the *Bhagavata* thoroughly, when I have been reading the book over and over these many years!" However, he went carefully over the book once more and appeared before the king. The king replied to him in the same strain as before. The *brahmana* was sorely vexed, but thought there must be some meaning in this

behaviour of the king. So he went home, shut himself up in his room, and applied himself more than ever to the study of the book. By and by, hidden meanings began to flash before his intel-

lect, and the vanity of running after the bubbles of riches and honour, kings and courts, wealth and fame, all vanished from his unclouded vision. From that day forward he gave himself up entirely to attaining perfection by worship of God, and never thought of returning to the king. A few years after, the king remembered the *brahmana* and went to his house to see what he was about. Seeing him now, all radiant with divine light and love, he fell upon his knees and said, "I see that you have now arrived at

the true meaning of the scriptures! I am ready indeed to be your disciple, if you will condescend to make me one!"

— *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 194-95, Almora Edn. (1934)



The Way of Natural Enlightenment: The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi

By Lex Hixon

RAMANA Maharshi, who lived until 1950, is already regarded as one among the classical sages of India. Although he remained in simple rural surroundings and was never strongly influenced by European culture, Ramana lived at the core of awareness from which radiate the languages and images of all cultures. His teaching is uniquely accessible because of the directness of his way to Enlightenment, which is not wedded to Indian culture or to the particular forms of any culture or religion but springs from the primal *I am*, or conscious being, shared naturally by members of every culture.

Ramana's father was a lawyer. There was a certain atmosphere of piety in the household which involved ritualistic worship of various Hindu gods and goddesses, but young Ramana underwent no intense religious training. He attended the local Christian school, where sports interested him more than studies and where he was regarded as ordinary. He had just one unusual characteristic: he was subject to such deep sleep that nothing could rouse him. His boyhood friends would carry him from place to place, or even pummel him as he slept. Hours later he would wake, totally unaware of what had occurred.

Ramana's life continued in a conventional manner until, at the age of sixteen, he read about the lives and practices of the South Indian saints. As a result, he experienced an immediate, though mild, euphoria which lasted several days. He did not interpret this euphoria as a spiritual experience. This was the first tremor of his spiritual awakening.

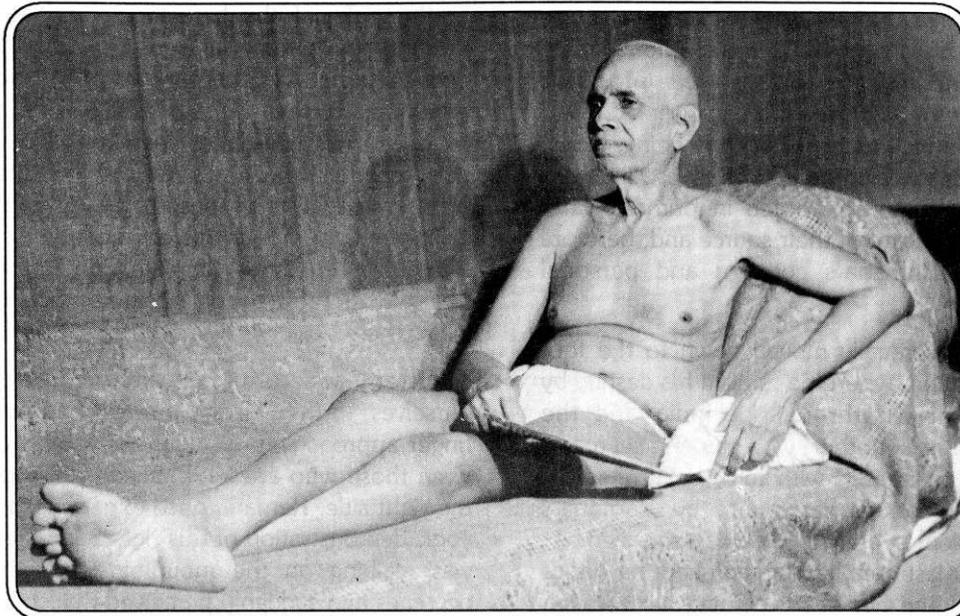
Several months later, Ramana experienced the sudden opening into Ultimate Consciousness

in which his individual identity was entirely lost. Suddenly there flashed into view, timeless and complete, the primal awareness that lies at the source of our being, the Ultimate Consciousness that is the source of being itself.

This proved not to be an isolated trance. The radiant flow of this primal awareness continued to be experienced throughout Ramana's waking, dream, and dreamless sleep. It was focused in the spiritual center Ramana later called the Heart, two fingers to the right of the breast-bone. He did not impose any religious interpretation on his spontaneous experience. He simply noticed the blissful flow of primal awareness that went on in the right-hand Heart continuously during the day and at night. Imagine that you are startled. Isolate in your imagination the sudden tingling sensation that flashes through your nervous system. The current of illumination was experienced by Ramana as a similar sensation, but continuous rather than momentary, healing and absorbing rather than shattering or distracting.

After his Enlightenment, Ramana often visited the Meenakshi temple. He had seldom gone there as a child but was now attracted to various temples because, no matter how institutionalised they were, primal awareness was mysteriously focussed there. As Ramana stood before the image of Shiva, sometimes he would pray. At other times he would find no need to pray but would stand silently before the image, experiencing the limitless expanse of Ultimate Consciousness that both he and Shiva equally expressed. This mood of unity became completely natural to him.

Yet a certain life-pattern remained operative



for Ramana, regardless of this condition of complete unity, or illumination. His destiny was to reside at Arunachala mountain. Ramana experienced a burning sensation in his body which was not alleviated until he left home and, without knowing why, travelled to Arunachala, the holy mountain in South India where for hundreds of years sages and ascetics have lived and practised. Ramana simply heard the mention of Arunachala, and his body burned until he arrived at this Heart mountain, where he remained, without once leaving, for over fifty years until his physical death.

When the young Ramana first arrived at Arunachala, he felt no concern whatever for the preservation of the body. He would remain motionless for days at a time, neither eating nor sleeping, totally absorbed in the current of primal awareness from which all phenomena emerge and into which they disappear again like bubbles in a stream. He had not yet begun to direct concern toward living beings, for he now perceived no separate beings or objects, simply

the unbroken expanse of Ultimate Consciousness. Ramana was discovered seated in a dark underground cellar and was sometimes fed by force.

The flowering of compassion and concern occurred spontaneously. The various spiritual practitioners, or *sadhus*, who lived on the mountain assumed that Ramana had taken a vow of silence because he never spoke. But Ramana had not undertaken any vows. He simply did not think to speak, to eat, or to move, being so absorbed in the awareness of perfect unity. When *sadhus* encountered difficulty with an abstruse passage of scripture, Ramana spontaneously and clearly explained from his own spiritual experience the obscure scriptural meaning. After that, various *sadhus* came to Ramana, who could solve their problems, practical or philosophical, with one or two words, or even through silence. Thus a small ashram, or spiritual community, gathered naturally around Ramana where he lived, high on the mountainside. This growing concern of Ramana to aid others along their

way to the experience of unity represents a significant change, which did not alter in any way his original Enlightenment in which the structure of *self* and *other* had dissolved into pure Consciousness. Now, without obscuring the expanse of perfect unity, individual beings reappeared to Ramana's perception. These individuals, although naturally rooted in primal awareness, were ignorant of their source and therefore in need of Ramana's concern and personal assistance.

Ramana eventually moved down to the foot of the mountain, where he fulfilled his destiny by becoming known throughout India and the world. Ramana's mother, who came in search of him, chose to remain with him, being inspired to lead the contemplative life by Ramana's powerful, silent presence. One day she died. As she took her last breaths, Ramana kept his hands on her head and her heart, guiding her through subtle psychic realms, clearing from her way various obstacles to the experience of perfect unity. With this potent assistance she attained *mukti*, or release into Ultimate Consciousness. She was therefore accorded a saint's burial at the foot of the mountain. Ramana used to walk down the mountain every day to spend some time at her tomb. One day, about six months after she died, Ramana strolled down the mountain and settled permanently there by the tomb. As Arunachala, or Shiva, had first drawn Ramana from his family home, so Shakti, or the Feminine Divine, drew Ramana to Her through the instrument of his human mother, making him available to humanity at large. Now that Ramana was accessible, a large ashram began to build up around him at the foot of the holy mountain.

Although he was the central focus for decades in an ashram visited by thousands of seekers from all over the world, Ramana never recognized anyone as his disciple. Many considered themselves his disciples and all took spiritual instruction from him, but Ramana declared unequivocally that no one was his disciple. He would tirelessly insist that Ultimate Consciousness alone is the Guru, or teacher. The Guru is

simply the primal awareness focussed two fingers to the right of the breastbone and accessible through the primordial sense, *I am*. Ramana explained that while we are aware of the body, the source of the *I am* is experienced in what he called the right-hand Heart, but if our attention becomes totally absorbed in the stream of primal awareness, all sense of an individual body dissolves and no exclusive location remains. Primal awareness, or Ultimate Consciousness, is then understood to be situated nowhere and everywhere.

Often, when we instinctively point to ourselves, to the *I* or the *me*, we find our index finger approaching the right center of the chest. Even those who are left-handed usually point to the right side. Ramana once experienced a clear yogic demonstration of this right-hand Heart. He was walking on the mountainside with some devotees and suddenly perceived that the natural scenery in front of him disappeared and a bright white curtain was drawn across his line of vision. For some minutes there were no physical signs of life. His blood circulation and breathing had stopped. Ramana could not speak but could hear his devotees bemoaning his death. He was perfectly awake and perceived his awareness radiating from the right side of the chest. Then, as Ramana reports, there was a flash as one spark of this universal conscious light leaped from the right side to the left side, igniting his physical heart into activity once more. Ramana later made use of certain Indian religious and philosophical language to express his basic spiritual insight but always assumed that his revelatory experience of the right-hand Heart was self-authenticating.

Ramana did indicate, however, that although the Guru, or teacher, is within everyone as primal awareness, an illumined sage can push us in the direction he described as *inward*, in the sense of being more primary, or primal. Ramana could give this initiatory push by touch or by glance. Seated in silence, he would suddenly turn, fix one with an intense gaze, and the person would become directly aware of the right-hand Heart and its vibrant current of primal

awareness! Those who experienced the power of Ramana's gaze have reported that the initiation was so clear and vivid they could never again seriously doubt that the Guru was none other than their own primal conscious being.

Ramana could also initiate by dream. There are instances of persons having dreams of him gazing into their eyes. Ramana did not consider himself as separate from these dreamers but as their own primal awareness, providing them with potent clues to Self-realisation. In certain instances, however, he actually bilocated and projected his presence, not into the dream but into the waking state of the seeker, through the power of conscious dreaming for which the waking state is simply another dream state—*dream one* and *dream two*, as Ramana used to call them. Ramana tells of an experience of bilocation in which he left his ordinary physical body in the ashram and at the same time found himself walking along a road hundreds of miles distant. He entered a temple and recognised that one of his followers was meditating there. The seeker was evoking Ramana and this had attracted Ramana to project himself there in order to intensify the spiritual practice of this sincere meditator, who looked up and actually perceived Ramana's luminous figure. However, Ramana never made use of such psychic powers, because he was not interested in manipulating the events of our waking dream but in awakening the seeker to primal awareness, which is prior to the states of dreaming and waking, prior to birth and death. His initiatory activity was entirely motivated by the concern that had awakened suddenly in that high mountain cave, the compassionate concern to guide all conscious beings into their ever-present source.

Ramana's compassion was instinctive and far reaching. It was not compassion in the emotional or sentimental sense but an intense living of the lives of all beings as our own life, an insight into the unity of all life as Ultimate Consciousness at play through countless forms. Ramana's compassion extended to animals and human beings equally. A certain cow used to come each morning to greet Ramana, spend the

Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng on Zen Mind

Shen-hsiu:

**The body is a Bodhi tree,
The mind a mirror bright;
Take care to clean it carefully
And let no dust alight.**

Hui-neng:

**The Bodhi tree does not exist
Nor does the mirror bright.
Since everything is empty
Where can dust alight?**

day grazing, and return spontaneously at twilight to bid him good night. When she died, Ramana placed his hands on the cow's head and heart, as he had done with his mother, guiding the animal through the illusions of separateness and multiplicity. Ramana confirmed that the cow had attained release into Ultimate Consciousness, and she was accorded a saint's burial.

Ramana's compassion poured out for all members of the animal kingdom. A dog was chasing a squirrel. Ramana saw the situation, turned suddenly, and threw his staff between them. This distracted the dog long enough that the squirrel escaped, but Ramana fell and broke his own collarbone. This self-sacrifice was completely spontaneous. Perfectly merged in the one Consciousness, not only as transcendence but also as immanence, Ramana simply experienced the squirrel's suffering as his own.

The spiritual teachings of Ramana Maharshi do not include certain traditional religious attitudes that are often thought necessary. The need for some Divinity or Absolute separate from oneself was superfluous to him. Enlightenment can spring up, as Ramana would say, directly from the ground of the *I am* by concentrating on this word that we use so often: *I, I, I*. The *I am* is not to be regarded as necessarily self-centered or limiting but as our central mode

of access to Ultimate Consciousness. One should not contemplate any assertion of the form *I am this* or *I am that* but simply the primal intuition *I am*, which is prior to all assertions.

Ramana's method for awakening into primal awareness, or awareness at its source, is called *vichara*, which simply means inquiry. It consists of continuously asking, and eventually living, the existential question: *Who is it that is having this particular thought or perception I am now having?* or, more simply, *Who am I?* The purpose of the questioning is not to isolate an individual *I* but to trace the rootedness of the separate *I* in the universal *I am*, which itself ultimately dissolves into primal awareness. This dynamic approach is without any form and without any particular intellectual or emotional content. Ramana was asked, for example, whether a seeker should meditate on the Vedantic affirmation *I am He* in order to evoke the experience of unity with the Divine. Ramana replied, *Find out first who it is that meditates on "I am He."* Thus *vichara* undercuts any possible content and any conceptual or doctrinal framework by asking, *Who is speaking?* regardless of the particular cultural or spiritual language being spoken.

Year after year Ramana sat in the meditation hall of the ashram, receiving all visitors and instructing them in *vichara*. Ramana would remain silent for many hours, either with eyes closed or gazing at nothing in particular. During these periods of silence, the visitors and residents would sit in Ramana's powerful presence, tracing their own primal awareness with eyes open or closed by inquiring, *Who am I?* Then Ramana would initiate or intensify the process of *vichara* in those present by his gaze and respond to questions, always redirecting the questioner to the root inquiry, *Who am I?*

Ramana did not regard the practice of *Who am I?* as a formal meditation technique but as an attitude that should quietly permeate daily consciousness. However, he did encourage beginners to sit for formal meditation morning and evening in order to help continue *vichara*

throughout the waking state and even during dream. After one penetrates deeply enough into inquiry, a natural flow is discovered and inquiry happens spontaneously. The increasing gravitational force of primal awareness intensifies the *Who am I?* as we approach closer to the core of ordinary awareness. Ramana says, *The quest for the Self of which I speak is a direct method, for the moment you really get into the quest and begin to go deeper, the real Self is waiting there to receive you, and then whatever is to be done is done by something else, and you as an individual have no hand in it.*

To those not drawn to pure *vichara*, who wished to use *mantra* or prayer, Ramana suggested practising *vichara* simply by tracing the source of the *mantra* or prayer, inquiring *Who is praying?* Therefore, although intrinsically independent of any verbal formulation, *vichara* can be carried on effectively in conjunction with traditional religious practices. Yet Ramana's teachings tend to move us beyond religious imagery, directly to its source. We may spend years visualising divine forms in our prayer or meditation, eventually to realise that these are none other than potent manifestations of primal awareness. For Ramana, direct investigation of the roots of our own awareness was preferred. After experiencing all as Ultimate Consciousness, if we are still drawn to the traditional worship of Christ or Krishna, then such worship is our karmic destiny, the flow of primal awareness through our particular pattern or grain. Ramana himself was linked with the mountain Arunachala as a manifestation of Shiva, or transcendent wisdom. He was compelled to go there. Similarly, Ramakrishna was linked with Divine Mother Kali as manifest at the Dakshineswar temple garden. We all have some deep karmic pattern which Indian philosophy interprets as impressions from our previous lifetimes but which could also be understood as the interplay of spiritual archetypes focussing through us. When we advance in *vichara*, these patterns of manifestation do not simply disappear. The forms, the places, the spiritual languages continue to appear but do not interrupt the life of

vichara, which is fundamentally formless, placeless, and silent.

The approach of *vichara*, since it is total and constant, tends to run counter to all formal rules. Ramana remarks: *Regulation of life, such as getting up at a fixed hour, bathing, repetition of a mantra, observing ritual, all this is for people who are not drawn to vichara. But for those who can practice this method, all rules and discipline are unnecessary.* Since *Who am I?* is not designed for deliberate contemplation, one should move from asking to living the question *Who am I?* Eventually one arrives at the point where this inquiry is not a deliberate mental act but part of the flow of daily awareness, continually and naturally reorienting itself toward its source as primal awareness. As one checks the clock, the inquiry naturally arises *Who is telling time?* As one opens a book, awareness spontaneously inquires, *Who is reading?* Thus daily activity is not inhibited but gradually rendered transparent to Ultimate Consciousness.

The *Who am I?* is an underlying attitude, not a *mantra* to repeat over and over again. Ramana often playfully remarked that if one insists upon repeating a *mantra*, the best *mantra* is *I, I, I*—playfully, because this is what we are already doing. However, the point is not to reinforce this *I* as a specific personal being, as we ordinarily do, but to reveal the source of the *I am*, which is inexpressible, because it has no form or quality but simply is. Someone asked Ramana whether there was ever an answer to *Who am I?* and he replied, *You just stop questioning.* The Consciousness that asks the question is already the answer.

Vichara is characterised by Ramana as attenuation of ego. Ego creates various melodic lines against the hum or drone of primal awareness. When listening to Indian classical music, Ramana reports, his main attention naturally focussed on the rich underlying drone rather than on the melody. In the unilluminated state, we hardly notice the profoundly integrating tone of primal awareness, because we are distracted by the play of ego. Self-realisation, or Enlighten-

Foretaste of Divine Bliss

By Dianne Veilleux

**Once in my life, only once
My Self linked with another's Self,
Merging into one spark of bliss,
Self to Self, as the One Self.**

**Neither a friend, nor a lover
Were the cause of so unique a joy,
But a happy three-year-old infant,
A clear reflector of the Self.**

**In the span of one brief moment
As my eyes gazed into his eyes,
Our Selves came face to face
And shook hands in eternity.**

**That sparkle of light in his eyes,
As our souls fused into one smile,
Mirrored the pristine bliss I felt
Of the Beloved's perfect love.**

**This memory lives on in my heart,
Mirror of eternity in a twinkle,
A foretaste of the union divine
Between the soul and the Beloved.**

ment, is the rediscovery of this peaceful hum of conscious being as a single eternal flow, which does not eliminate the countless melodic lines but harmonises and grounds them.

Ramana used the term *mind* synonymously with *ego*, and spoke about the disappearance of mind, which simply means awakening to primal awareness. Ramana often remarked that the sage's mind is like the moon in a daytime sky. The sage does not need the moonlight to see, because the sun of primal awareness is shining. At the same time, the sage is clearly aware of the daytime moon, or mind, and refers to the mind in conventional mundane matters. As the source of the moon's reflected light is the sun, so the source of the mind's thought and percep-

tion is primal awareness. Disappearance of the mind, therefore, is simply attending to the source of the mind's reflected light and need not involve loss of ability to think and to perceive.

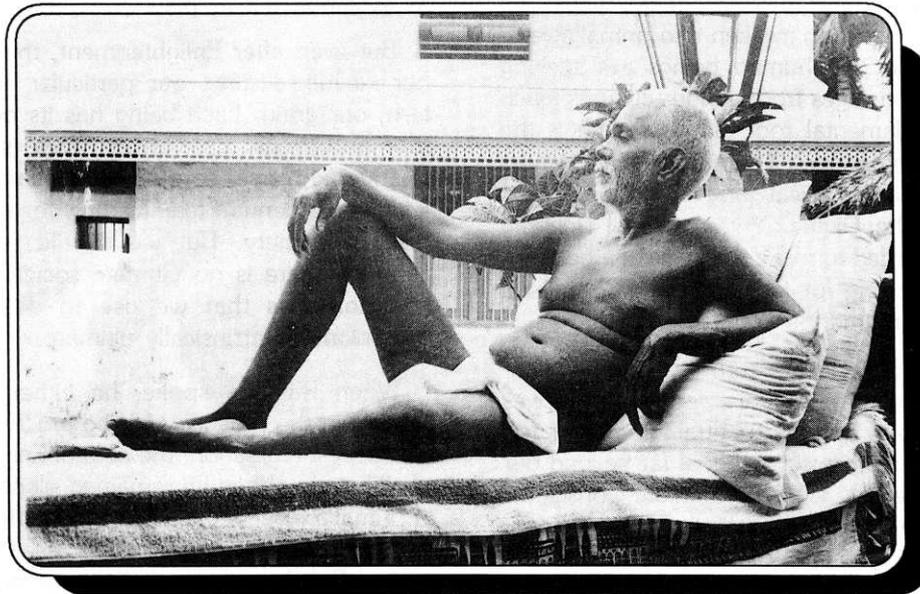
The transcendence of mind or ego, however, cannot be undertaken directly or willfully, for this would immediately reinvolve the ego, which is, as Ramana often joked, like the thief acting as policeman in order to apprehend himself. Rather than battling the worldly ego with a more intense spiritual ego, Ramana counsels us to scorch the ego by ignoring it. One scorches the ego by seeing into its intrinsic emptiness, its nature as mere reflection. Moonlight is nothing other than reflected sunlight, and in this sense there is no moonlight. As Ramana teaches: *Instead of setting about saying there is a mind or an ego and I want to kill it, you must begin to seek its source and find that it does not exist at all.... When the mind unceasingly investigates its own nature it transpires that there is no such thing as mind. This is the direct path for everyone.... the fact is that the mind is only a bundle of thoughts.... Find its source and hold on to it. The mind will fade away of its own accord.* Thus the practitioner of *vichara* walks slowly and persistently toward the mirage of separate ego, which at first seems to recede intact, and then simply and naturally dissolves the mirage of distractions, enabling us to perceive the endlessly flowing and refreshing stream of primal awareness.

Vichara goes to the root of all contemplative practices. For instance, concerning the yogic form of contemplation, *I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not the senses*, Ramana remarked, *In order to be able to say "I am not this," there must be the I to say it.... The I-thought is the root thought. If the root is pulled out, all the rest is at the same time uprooted.* No particular assertions or negations are necessary in order to return to that primal ground, that Ultimate Consciousness which we already are. Yet we are often tempted to engage in some form of analysis, forgetting to inquire,

Who is analyzing? A visitor asked Ramana, *Suppose I have the thought "horse" and I try to trace its source. I find that it is due to memory and the memory in turn is due to prior perception of the object "horse."* Ramana replied, *Who asked you to think about all that? All those are also thoughts. What good will it do you to go on thinking about memory and perception? That I which has the perception of memory.... find that out.* Thus *vichara* is more direct than psychological analysis, both Eastern and Western, because it does not rely primarily on articulation. And *vichara* is even more direct than most contemplative techniques, which, if not analytic in nature, may rely on imagination and thus do not focus directly on the primal awareness prior to all articulation. Whatever form of contemplation we practice, we must eventually inquire, *Who is practising?*

Yet *vichara*, precisely because unsupported by intellectual or emotional articulation, can be painfully difficult to sustain. Constant *vichara* resembles the attempt to remain awake for days at a time. The sleepiness that overwhelms us in this attempt is distraction from the source of awareness by the various objects or structures of awareness. This path of staying awake to primal awareness, which Ramana characterised as most direct and simple, is perhaps the most demanding practice of all.

We now move from the consideration of Ramana's teaching *Who am I?* to the natural Enlightenment which this approach presupposes. One does not continually inquire *Who am I?* to attain some miraculous superawareness but to awaken into the Ultimate Consciousness, which already constitutes everyday thought and perception. Ramana's realisation is simply this: Enlightenment is never absent. We already are primal awareness. This very mind that is now thinking and reading is none other than Ultimate Consciousness, the ground of being. As long as we withhold our full assent to such an affirmation, we must continue spiritual practice and wait. But when we can feel honestly at home



with the attitude that the ultimate goal is attained, and has always been attained, this is the dawn of Self-realisation.

The return to the original clarity of Ultimate Consciousness is comparable to a game of chess in which we must gradually sacrifice all our pieces in order to open ourselves to checkmate, or Enlightenment. This process of clearing away leaves nothing to be thought or perceived. As Ramana tells his listeners, *Meditation helps to overcome the illusion that the Self, or Atman, is something to see.* There is nothing to see, only to be. Ramana often asked: *How do you recognise yourself now? Do you need a mirror?* One does not even have to inquire, *Who am I?* Experiment now. Close your eyes. As particular sensations subside, the body blends into the general sensory background. For a few moments at least, the mind may not break into habitual patterns of thinking. Balance here in simple awareness. Do you require any mirror, name, or concept to point to yourself now? This

primal awareness is you, as well as all sentient beings. This is Ultimate Consciousness, the goal of all sacred quest. All spiritual practice is preparing or purifying us to be able to remain continuously as this simple presence.

We need not close our eyes. That was simply an aid to the contemplative experiment. Repeat the same process with eyes open. Feel awareness radiating from the primal *I am*, gradually flowering into thinking and perceiving. Now turn from this articulation to its source. No further authentication of primal awareness is necessary. Neither are there two selves, higher and lower, absolute and relative. There is only consciousness. Says Ramana, *Consciousness is the Self of which everyone is aware. No one is ever away from his Self and therefore everyone is in fact Self-realised. Only, and this is the great mystery, people do not know this and want to realise the Self.*

Yet this mysterious desire to realise the Self,

to be completely and continuously conscious of consciousness, is rare and precious. Perhaps most persons, unless probed deeply, would not admit to any desire to awaken into primal awareness. However, all human beings are seeking fulfillment, and sages from various cultures teach that the fundamental root of this search is the longing to experience Ultimate Consciousness or, in another mystical language, to taste of union with the Divine. Yet a gradual ripening process is needed to make the transition between instinctive longing for fulfillment and disciplined spiritual commitment.

When we consciously turn toward Enlightenment as a goal, ironically we separate ourselves from it. In our longing to attain the ultimate, inadvertently we project the goal far beyond our present awareness, whereas Ultimate Consciousness is already here, sustaining the ordinary function of mind and senses. Even after the aspiration to Enlightenment awakens, we will travel along countless byways before returning home to primal awareness. This process of spiritual evolution is a house of mirrors. Knowing that we must move through a mirror maze does not help to discover the shortest path. We will have to explore various corridors, colliding with mirrored walls that appear to be open doors.

But even as we are undergoing this process of spiritual development, which may appear as a game of chess or a maze, we should affirm Ramana's basic realisation that we are naturally Enlightened. Ramana once remarked: *Realisation consists only in getting rid of the false idea that one is not realised.* When liberated from this false notion by Ramana's illumined affirmation, we recognise consciousness itself to be the ultimate fulfillment that human beings have endlessly sought. Our daily consciousness is intrinsically Ultimate Consciousness. This insight, which is the dawning of Enlightenment, need not change any appearing structures. One need not be transformed from a lawyer working in the city to a monk or nun meditating in the mountains. No form of creativity is inhibited by the realisation that the goal of

all life has always been attained as primal awareness. Life is now no longer regarded primarily as evolution but as play.

But even after Enlightenment, there remains our *karmic* destiny, our particular energy pattern, our grain. Each being has its own special momentum or motivation. This is why the relative universe continues to manifest. Our *karmic* momentum may lead us, for instance, to reshape society. But we should realise that although there is no ultimate society, this very consciousness that we use to design social institutions is intrinsically ultimate.

When Ramana spoke, he either instructed seekers in the practice of *Who am I?* or evoked his deepest realisation: the natural Enlightenment of all beings. When he remained silent, absorbed in primal awareness, his presence both instructed seekers in *vichara* and fully expressed the fact of natural Enlightenment which exists prior to any spiritual practice. Ramana teaches: *You speak of various paths as if you were somewhere and the Self were somewhere else and you had to go and attain it. But in fact the Self is here and now and you are it always. It is like being here at the ashram and asking people the way to Ramanasramam and then complaining that each one shows a different path and asking which one to follow.* The remark enables us to understand more deeply Ramakrishna's conviction that all spiritual paths lead to the same goal. The paths are illusory, and this, ironically, is why they are fundamentally in harmony. There are no separate paths. There is only consciousness itself, which is always present and thus cannot be described as a goal. What we thought were paths to a goal are just the playfulness of Ultimate Consciousness.

Various spiritual practices impart their own flavor to Self-realisation, or Enlightenment. Goddess Kali, as a divine form assumed by Ultimate Consciousness, imparted Her lasting fragrance to the illumined being of Ramakrishna, who repeated Her *mantra* with his last breath.

Similarly, circumambulation and praise of the holy mountain remained a form of veneration for the illumined Ramana until his death. The presence of Kali, or Arunachala, can persist for these enlightened beings precisely because such divine forms are not intrinsically separate from primal awareness. Their nature is dream-like, but their reality is more archetypal than the dream of space and time. They are comparable to the transcendental forms of Plato's philosophy, living principles whose mode of being is indestructible because it is not substantial in any physical sense. We cannot dissolve a geometrical theorem. And countless systems of geometry, each with contrasting axioms, can subsist simultaneously. They do not impede each other. This is the nature of the various spiritual paths. They are intrinsically transparent to the Ultimate Consciousness at their source.

Let us consider Ramana Maharshi's physical death. At seventy, he developed a tumor on his arm which was operated on several times without anesthetic. Ramana tried to clarify the meaning, or lack of meaning, of pain and illness for the totally illumined person: *They take this body for Ramana and attribute suffering to him. What a pity! Where is pain if there is no mind?* The approach of Ramana was not that of the healer who removes pain but that of the sage who perceives all phenomena, including pain, as Ultimate Consciousness. Years before, Ramana had elucidated this point: *If the hand of the jnani, or knower of truth, were cut with a knife, there would be pain as with anyone else, but because his mind is in bliss, he does not feel the pain as acutely as others do.* Thus ordinary bodily experience does exist for the illumined sage, although greatly muted.

When begged by some devotees to cure himself with yogic powers, Ramana replied in the spirit of *vichara*: *Who is there to have such a thought? Who is there to will this?* When near death, Ramakrishna received this same request from his devotees. Rather than responding immediately, as Ramana did, from the standpoint of unitary insight, Ramakrishna

agreed to ask his Divine Mother Kali. He went to the temple and humbly requested, *Mother, please let me eat a little in order to keep the body together.* Goddess Kali replied, *You are eating through all mouths. Why do you have to eat through his mouth?* The same truth is being expressed through both these revelatory media: the source consciousness of Ramana and the Divine Mother of Ramakrishna. The source and the Mother are the same primal awareness.

During his final illness, various devotees of Ramana continued to plead that they needed his physical presence to help them in their spiritual practice. Ramana replied, *You attach too much importance to the body. They say that I am dying, but I am not going away: Where would I go? I am here.* Ramana, like any illumined being, is everywhere. He is with us now as we think about him. Ramana is the Ultimate Consciousness that we are. And we are Ramana. His life is an expression of our own deepest life. His story is essentially our own awakening.

The physical death occurred on April 14, 1950. Some devotees outside his room were singing at dusk one of Ramana's own hymns to Shiva as the Mountain Arunachala. On hearing the song, writes an eyewitness, *Ramana's eyes opened and shone. He gave a brief smile of indescribable tenderness.* This was the poignant tenderness of a mother for her children. The devotees were singing as spiritual children to the Mountain Arunachala, which Ramana knew to be actually their own primal awareness. The eyewitness continues: *From the outer edges of his eyes tears of bliss rolled down. One more deep breath and no more. There was no struggle, no other sign of death, only that the next breath did not come.*

Cartier-Bresson, the French photographer, had come to the ashram the week before. He tells the following remarkable experience at the hour of Ramana's physical death: *I saw a shooting star with a luminous tail unlike any I have ever seen before, moving slowly across the sky and reaching the top of Arunachala, the moun-*

tain, disappearing behind it. We immediately looked at our watches. It was 8:47. We raced to the ashram only to find that the master had passed into Mahanirvana at that exact minute. Nor was this experience only documented by a select few.... All the English and Tamil papers which arrived this morning from Madras referred to the meteor which had been seen in the sky over the entire state of Madras at 8:47 on the night of April 14, by a large number of people in different places. These eyewitnesses had been struck by its peculiar look and

behaviour. Was this an ordinary meteor or was Ramana simply dreaming this brilliant presence into the collective dream of our waking state as his last tribute to Arunachala, as his last act of worship or circumambulation of the holy mountain? Responds Ramana: *Who is asking this question?*

From *Coming Home: The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions* by Lex Hixon.

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Footprints

One night I had a dream—
 I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord and
 Across the sky flashed scenes from my life.
 For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand.
 One belonged to me and the other to the Lord.
 When the last scene of my life flashed before me,
 I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
 I noticed that many times along the path of my life
 There was only one set of footprints.
 I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest
 times in my life.
 This really bothered me and I questioned the Lord about it.
 "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,
 You would walk with me all the way,
 But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life
 There is only one set of footprints.
 I don't understand why in times when I needed you most you
 should leave me."
 The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and
 I would never never leave you during your times of
 trial and suffering.
 When you saw only one set of footprints,
 It was then that I carried you."

— Anonymous

Heart Full of Love: His Holiness the Dalai Lama

By Vijay Kranti

Vijay Kranti: *When you think about yourself, which aspect of your personality is dominant: the Dalai Lama who is head of the Tibetan nation and a statesman, or the Dalai Lama who is a religious leader?*

Dalai Lama:

[Smiles]. Just a monk, a humble bhikshu. I think at my subconscious level the feeling of being a monk is much stronger. Even in my dreams, I always think of myself as a monk and not as the Dalai Lama who is head of the Tibetan nation.

VK: *What is your normal daily routine in Dharamsala?*

DL: Nothing special. I eat, sleep and talk *[laughs]* ... Being a Buddhist monk, I usually get up in the morning as early as possible, generally between 4 and 4:30. That is useful. At that time your mind is very

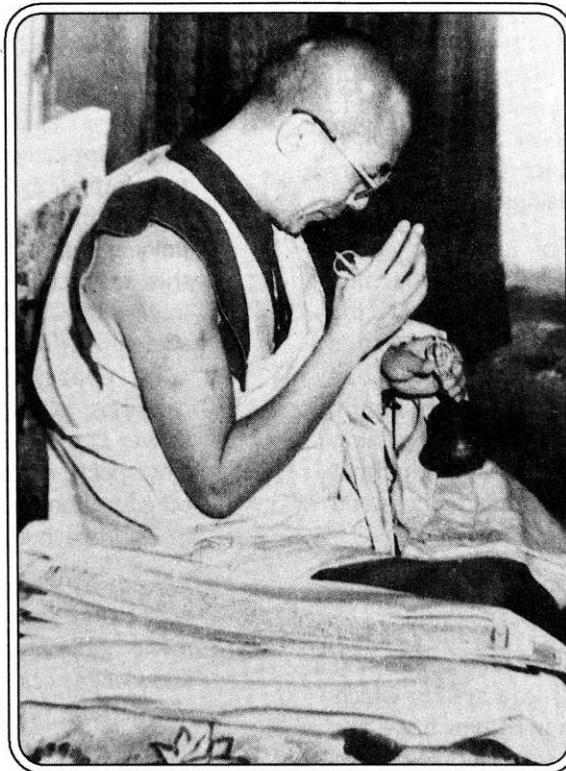
fresh. You can meditate with concentration and you can direct your thoughts to any problem and analyse it.

The only negative thing about my rising early is that in the late evenings my eyelids become very heavy. After 9 or 10 at night, I feel very sleepy. So whenever I have late-evening engagements, it is very difficult for me to manage. During the day I read and meet people. I enjoy meeting people and knowing about them and their views. Sometimes, when I have time, I look after my garden. But Dharamsala is not a very good place for gardening. Heavy rains and winter spoil most of the things you do. So now I limit my gardening to my small greenhouse.

VK: *Tibetans believe that you are the incarnation of Avalo-*

kiteshwara, the Buddha of Mercy and Compassion. Do you feel it yourself?

DL: I regard myself as a reincarnation of a



The author has been a journalist of international repute for more than twenty years. His first meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan refugee community was in 1972. On account of his keen interest in the Tibetans he has undertaken lecture tours to Europe and the U.S.A. Presently he is developing a photo archive on Tibet.

blessed one. There are certain indications which strongly support the belief that Tenzin Gyatso has some connection with the previous Dalai Lamas, which in turn would link him to Avalokiteshwara and Lord Buddha. Again, as a Buddhist, I may venture to say that without some karmic force, this could not have happened.

VK:*How can one achieve peace at the personal level or for all society?*

DL: Whether it is peace within a person, a family or a society, it depends on the feeling of love and warm-heartedness among the people involved. That is why I always emphasise the importance of love, compassion and an altruistic attitude. Interestingly, all these things are independent of religion. It is equally applicable to non-believers. These basic human feelings are universal and are incorporated in every religion that human beings practise today.

Unfortunately, most of us try to derive peace and happiness from outer factors, like money, property and power. But the real, long-lasting peace and tranquillity is independent of all these things. They come from within. You can easily generate them through love, compassion and an altruistic attitude. That is why I put more emphasis on warm-heartedness and a sense of universal responsibility.

VK:*How does one develop a good heart and a sense of universal responsibility?*

DL: I know it is a difficult and time-consuming process. We are living in a system which is quite complicated and in which we are subject to pressures. Even if people believe in and want peace and justice, they are not able to put this into practice because of environmental pressures. That is why I have more faith and hope in future generations. No doubt, this increases the responsibility of our younger generation.

VK:*Would you please elaborate?*

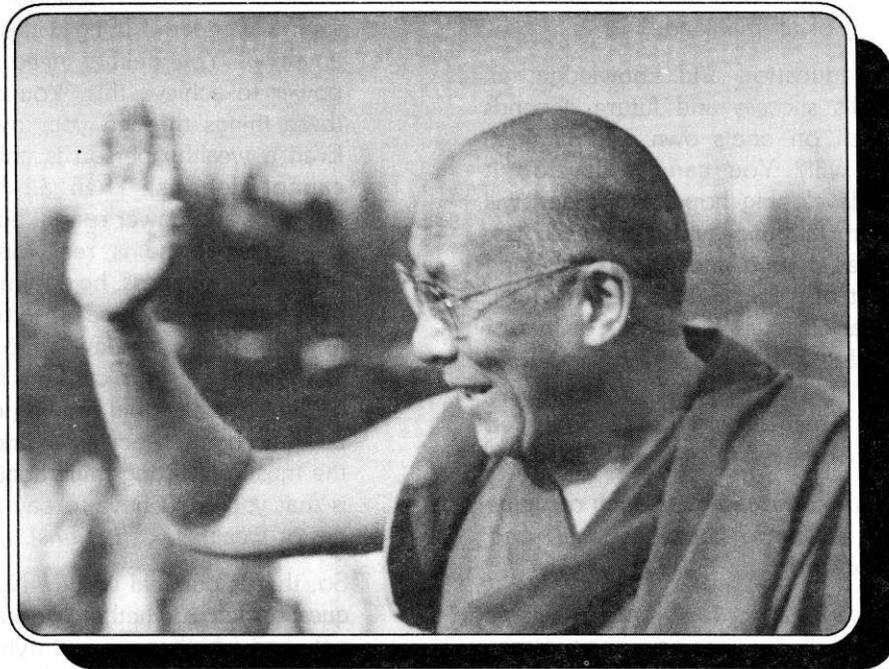
DL: There is no doubt that without a sense of universal responsibility, based on morality, our existence as a human society is at risk today. It has, therefore, become necessary to create a world of love, justice and equality. But such qualities have to be inculcated in a person from childhood. Without this basic change, we cannot expect this or the next generation to bring about a change. That is why I lay hope in the future generations. But this can be achieved only by initiating a major change right now in our present education system on a worldwide basis.

VK:*What changes do you favour in education?*

DL: As human beings we have a long history of development and evolution. I think the transformation which the human race has undergone during its development is unique, compared to any other species. In this respect, one key factor is human intelligence. That is why, in our human society, extreme importance is laid on good education. During the previous centuries, our material development was slower due to lack of knowledge. That is why special emphasis has always been laid on education and acquisition of knowledge to improve human skills and abilities.

We are making efforts to equip ourselves with better knowledge about our environment and nature. On the basis of this knowledge, science and technology have reached the present stage. As a result, we have achieved certain things in this century which were beyond the imagination of our previous generations.

VK:*But the same knowledge has produced a new range of instruments of destruction which can wipe out the human race. Where have we gone wrong?*



DL: I am coming to this. We human beings are a product of this very world. Despite much knowledge and ability, we still lack something very important. I believe that education, as is commonly known, is not the answer. Even in countries where levels of literacy and material development are high, they have problems—some kind of mental unrest. In western countries everything looks beautiful on the surface, but something is missing underneath.

Knowledge or education is, no doubt, good and necessary. But this by itself is not everything. Knowledge is something like an instrument and much depends on the user of this instrument. Therefore, along with the material development and increasing knowledge, the spiritual development of its user—the individual—is equally important. It must also go hand-in-hand with the increasing material

knowledge so that society gets the positive and creative benefits of this development.

I would say that the world today is not lacking on the knowledge front. We are much better off than our ancestors. But still we are facing many problems. Some problems are beyond our control. But there are problems which are man-made and can be definitely reduced—if not eliminated—simply through developing certain attitudes. I am sure about it.

For proper development, I feel that we need a well-balanced education. We need inner spiritual development to acquire a warm heart, which is the basic requirement. A warm heart is a quality that channelises all human abilities in the right direction. If this quality is missing, then no one can ensure that knowledge would bring happiness or that it will not be destructive. So a good heart is the most

important and crucial prerequisite for the happiness of all mankind.

Besides education and knowledge, an individual's success and future depends very much on one's own will. How to develop will? You cannot develop it without developing hope. Hope and will are the crucial things which bring success. Sometimes, hatred and anger also bring some sort of will or determination. But if we look at our own experience or that of our friends, or if we analyse history, then we would realise that will or determination that is actually motivated by hatred and anger have been always disastrous.

VK: *Is there any other source which can give us inner strength, happiness, will and determination?*

DL: Yes. Compassion, love and altruism. Compassion brings you new hope, freshness and mental tranquillity. It can help you develop a certain kind of determination. That determination, generally speaking, has almost no possibility of bringing disaster.

If our mind is in a state of ease and calmness, then even lack of some material facilities does not matter. But if our mind is not happy and calm, then even if we live in a house equipped with the best available facilities, we cannot be happy. That is really bad. You have food but you have no taste for it. You have a bed but can't sleep. Therefore, you take the help of tranquillizers or sleeping pills.

Ultimately, we realise that the best source of happiness and peace is a good heart, a warm heart. If your heart feels warm, then you are happy; but if your heart is filled with hatred and anger, then something is missing. So the conclusion is that a heart full of love and compassion is the main source of inner strength, will-power, happiness and mental tranquillity.

Sometimes, I myself wonder that we

human beings can develop or produce such a wonderful thing without spending anything. You neither need money nor power to achieve this. You can develop these things through your own practice. Even a wealthy person is unhappy if he cannot do this. Then all his money, influence and power cannot buy him inner happiness. If he is really interested in achieving happiness, he does not need any sophisticated machines or money. One just has to try to develop certain inner feelings. And one can do that simply through practice and training one's mind. So, this human faculty is priceless. And the most interesting thing about this asset is that you don't have to pay any income tax or wealth tax. [*Laughs*].

So, that is our real wealth. Now the only question left is whether we realise this or not, and whether we are trying to make use of this potential or not.

We human beings are social animals. To survive, we need companions and friends and a community. Without a community, no matter how able one is or how much education one has, one cannot survive. Therefore, we need companions—and surely companions means friends, not enemies.

VK: *How can one have genuine friends?*

DL: Love and kindness is the key to making friends. It works in our daily life. Here your power, your wealth may also be of some help, but these have their limitations. Take the case of a person who has both power and wealth. He will have a number of regular visitors who would claim to be his friends—big smiles on their faces, and some cheap presents in their hands. Are they really friends? I don't think so. Because we often see that as soon as the person loses power or wealth, or both, then those friends also say goodbye. Finally, you discover that these people were friends of your money and

your power. They were not 'your' friends. Your real friends are always with you, whether you are in a good condition or are passing through an unfortunate period. You always find them by your side.

All of us need real friends. We need them more when we are passing through difficult times. But how do we make such trustworthy friends? Not through money, not through wealth or through a few good words. Only through genuine motivation and genuine behaviour. If feelings come from the heart, not only human beings but even animals and insects become friends.

To mention my own experience, when I was young, I think 10 or 11, I had a few birds, including a parrot, in my house. Whenever one of my attendants, who also taught me Tibetan in the beginning, would pass by the parrot's cage, he would always offer him nuts or something else to eat. Therefore, the moment this person would appear in the corridor, the bird would get excited. Then this person would give him nuts. The attendant would put his finger into the cage and the bird would come and sit on it. I could easily feel the friendship between the two.

It was very exciting and I also expected the same kind of response from the parrot. I would, therefore, give him some nuts. The bird would come and take nuts but always stayed at the other end of the cage. He never showed the same friendliness to me as he would show to the attendant. I did not like this and would always get angry. I brought a stick so as to make him behave the way I wanted. But this made him more scared.

VK: *What about your experience with human beings?*

DL: In 1959 China occupied Tibet. I came to India as a stateless refugee. I went to so many places in India and met people—

rich, poor, educated as well as uneducated. Sometimes, even while passing through villages, people would show closeness with me. Though we had a big language barrier between us, I could always feel the warmth in their greetings. This is a unique quality with us human beings. We can communicate even without language—through a smile or even through expressions in our eyes.

This is equally true in terms of countries—irrespective of whether it is a socialist, communist or capitalist country. In my opinion, there is no difference between them. After all, all these systems and all these ideologies are actually meant for the welfare of humanity. Therefore, I personally don't find any difference between one or the other country, or between one human being and the other.

When I meet a person, I am guided by a simple feeling that he is also a human being like me. His race, his nationality or his political ideology become irrelevant and secondary. As a result, I can say that I have quite a good number of friends all over the world. They may belong to any country but at the human level they are simply friends. So, even if you are stateless, you live among friends. It gives you the satisfaction, inspiration and calmness which add to your inner strength.

VK: *Is it essential to be religious to develop this type of attitude?*

DL: Love and compassion is the universal religion. It does not matter whether one believes in a particular religion, or even if one is a very anti-religious person. But as long as one is a human being, a member of this human society, success and happiness would depend on this specific quality. Hence it is necessary to develop this quality.

Whenever I visit new places and meet new people from new cultures, I always

exchange my experience on this subject. I have found that most of them agree on this point

When we talk of love, compassion and forgiveness, then very often some people feel that this is a part of some religious business. I think that this is not right. It is not religion. If we want to be really happy human beings or to live in a more harmonious, peaceful and friendly human society, the presence of these elements is a precondition.

So we find that love and compassion are the most fundamental elements required to build a happy family, a happy society and a happy world. Irrespective of one's religion or political philosophy, one common thing about all of us is that we all need love in our lives. If there is no place for love in our minds then no amount of material possessions, knowledge or education is going to help us. In that case, we will only create suffering and confusion—for ourselves as well as for others. It is only the practice of love and compassion towards others that can bring happiness and cordiality. I know it is not easy to practice this in all situations, but we should develop courage and commitment to a level where we can practice it easily.

VK: *This reminds me of a question my younger child asked me when he was just six years old. His question was, "I cannot understand why I am 'I' and why someone else is 'he' or 'she'?" I could not satisfy him. Would you please help?*

DL: All sentient beings include the self also. When we think in terms of self, then 'I' is obviously there. Similarly, in the case of any other person, 'I' is very much there in a completely identical way. So we see that 'I' is not independent. It belongs to everyone. Then thinking relatively, in the other person's view, you are an 'other' person. And from your viewpoint, he or she is an 'other' person. So we find that 'I' is quite relative and is interchangeable. This spontaneous feeling of 'I', as we Tibetans believe, is the continuation of the previous being.

Whatever be the racial, social, cultural or political background of an individual, there is a common innate grasping at 'I' in everyone. Also, there is an instinctive wish for happiness. This has been man's main and common concern throughout the ages. It is going to remain in future too. If one can realise the presence of this basic human element in others also, it becomes easier to have a feeling of sameness. It can also help in developing a sense of brotherhood and closeness among us. Once we develop this sense of brotherhood and closeness, then working together for a just, harmonious and happy society would become easy and natural.

[To be continued]

Excerpted with kind permission of the author from
Dalai Lama — the Nobel Peace Laureate — Speaks
 (Pub: Centrasia Publishing Group, New Delhi)

The wise discover that Atman which is not seen either by study of the Vedas, by initiations, by shaving the head, or by being a guru or a chela. Nor is it seen through postures.

— Avadhut Gita, Chapter II, v.25.

The Sadguru's Grace

By a Devotee

THE Sadguru's grace has no limitations. What means he will adopt to shower his grace on the devotee no one knows. One chooses to adore him according to one's own belief or choice. Initially, one is not in a position, i.e., not ripe enough to know him in all his limitless forms. So one imagines one knows him on the strength of some *japa* or *dhyana*. Slowly and steadily, with growing intensity of one's devotion, but mainly by the grace of the infinite, a devotee comes to his fold in a real way. The process does not get completed in a day or month or year; rather it may involve cycles of birth and death.

But at times the Sadguru adopts some extraordinary measures to bless the devotee who does not have even the slightest indication of such a possibility being near at hand.

It was through a book of Arthur Osborne that this ignorant devotee turned to Ramana-Arunachala and was thereafter enabled to realise the purpose of this meaningful life.

It all happened on a fateful day! It was a cold day in October 1966 and I was thoroughly disgusted with the world. Thoroughly sick and world-weary, I felt I led an existence which was no better than that of an animal. So perplexed I was that the only way out seemed to be to end this life. To get this end accomplished, the next moment I was on the road, going and going — where I didn't know. Surprisingly enough I stepped into a bookstall. The first book that caught my eyes at the bookstall was: *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge* by Arthur Osborne. I was not familiar with the author. Neither did I know about the Maharshi nor the title of the book. However what arrested

my imagination was the tiny photograph of the Maharshi sketched on the title-page which seemed to look upon me with compassion and tenderness. So I bought the book. Before this I had never purchased or studied any book on religion or mysticism. To my great astonishment I learnt it was the first ever and only copy of that book stocked at the bookstall (as disclosed by the owner, later on). There was an intense desire to study the book and complete it in the shortest possible time. It all happened automatically. The perusal of a few pages of the book gave startling results. I was mollified and feeling invigorated within. There was not even the slightest desire for ending this life as before; rather a desire to live a purposeful life came up.

Since that day the book has been read and re-read many a time, and with the grace of the Maharshi the veil of ignorance which hid the true identity of being gradually seemed to be lifted. Day after day I felt myself drawn nearer and nearer the Maharshi.

My joy knew no bounds when, about six years after this event, I could make the journey to Tiruvannamalai and surrender myself physically at the Lotus Feet of Lord Arunachala. This was in January 1973.

Since then, there has always been an inner urge to have the holy touch of Ramana-Arunachala in a physical sense again and again. Every pilgrimage to Arunachala has proved a blessing.

That is how the tiny photograph of the Maharshi worked upon this humble devotee, who not only has been granted an extra lease of life to know him and adore him, but also shown the doorway to Arunachala.

Padre Pio and Divine Compassion

By Gladys O' Rorke

The spiritual ministry of Padre Pio was extraordinary and eventful. He was a tireless and true servant of God who brought solace and comfort to thousands of imploring hearts.

Once a French lady at San Giovanni who had done a painting of Sri Bhagavan developed intense devotion to him. She prayed to him for confirmation whether he was to be her Guru. Sri Bhagavan appeared in her vision and showing the figure of Padre Pio, with his mitted hands, indicated that he (Padre Pio, whom she had never seen) was to guide her spiritual life.

FRANCESCO Forgione was born on the 25th May, 1887 in the village of Pietrelcina near Benevento, Italy. His parents were so poor that Orazio Forgione went twice to the United States where he worked as a labourer on Jamaica Island. One of eight children became a Capuchin Friar, Padre Pio, and to this giant spiritual magnet, pilgrims came from all over the world. Souls seeking solace and guidance were never disappointed by Padre Pio, who taught according to each individual's need and receptivity.

Padre Pio's ministry took place at San Giovanni Rotondo, a poor, primitive village clinging to the rugged, arid slopes of Monte Gargano rising about 1,800 feet above sea level.

It was in the small church of Our Lady of Grace that Padre Pio received the stigmata in

September 1918. These 'wounds of love' could not be kept a secret, and so people began climbing the steep hill leading from the village to receive the saint's blessing and guidance.

My first personal dialogue with Padre Pio was a silent one, but the impact on me was overwhelming, releasing a torrent of frozen tears from deep within my inner self. Later, when Padre Pio looked at me with his penetrating star-eyes, once again silence spoke. The silent speech which took place between Padre Pio and myself was eloquence itself. It was a powerful,

The author has given us two articles earlier on this saint: *The Mountain Path*, January 1967, pp. 41-45 and *The Mountain Path*, October 1969, pp. 248-51.



purifying force charged with spiritual energy which rendered me mute.

For three consecutive years I went to San Giovanni Rotondo where I was blessed by Padre Pio. On the last occasion a personal problem kept me from joining the group of pilgrims awaiting Padre after Mass. I felt unworthy to stand beside these people. Suddenly the door to my left opened, and there, close to me, stood Padre Pio, his wondrous eyes fixed intently on my face, flashing to me in sacred silence the mercy, forgiveness and compassion of the Divine... one pierced hand clad in mittens pressed itself against my lips... the silent dialogue flowed on, pure and free of ambiguities, then Padre Pio went past me and into the tiny chapel where he had received the stigmata, leaving me weeping with happiness as divine compassion comforted my heart.

One Giovanni P. Siena asked Padre Pio: 'Please ask God for a special grace which is dear to my heart.' Padre told him. 'I will do so, but only after you have undergone a period of trial and humiliations — and on one condition, that you persevere in patience and in your faith.'

When several years had gone by and Siena had not yet been accorded his desire, he wondered whether Padre Pio had not been mistaken. Discouraged and disheartened, Siena gave way in word and gesture to his impatience and loss of hope. Regretting his behaviour instantly, he entered the confessional only to hear Padre Pio say: 'What are you doing here? Go away. I have no time to waste.'

And yet Siena had not said one single word. He obeyed, weeping bitterly. Later, Padre Pio comforted him, explaining his harsh stance of the morning:

'Don't complicate matters; with your defiance you only retard matters. You are like the scarab who, whilst rolling his ball, suddenly lets it go, causing it to roll down the hill.'

Siena realised Padre wanted him to learn to endure, knowing his bad temper, inability to resign himself to things, as well as his great pride.

'Things are taking a long time, Padre,' Siena complained one day. Padre leaned forward to whisper in his ear: 'We must learn to endure.'

A lawyer residing in the province of Pesaro told Padre Pio that on Christmas Eve in 1948 he had driven his wife and children to Bologna to pick up the third child at college. Suffering from lack of sleep, he had found it difficult to keep awake at the wheel. Then he remembered nothing more for some time until his eyes flew open. He had been asleep whilst the car travelled on. He asked his passengers if they had noted nothing unusual during this period of time, and they told him that he had not replied to a single one of their questions put to him, staring straight ahead all the time.

'Padre, how could I drive whilst asleep?'

For a moment Padre remained silent, then he said: 'You slept. It was your Guardian Angel who took over the wheel.'

'Are you serious, Padre? This is true?'

'Your Guardian Angel protects you.' Then, placing a hand on the man's shoulder, Padre added: 'Yes, you slept, and whilst you slept your Guardian Angel drove your car.'

Padre Giovanni of Baggio, a Tuscan friar, sought counsel from Padre Pio:

'What is necessary, Padre, for personal sanctification?'

'Two things are necessary,' was the reply, 'a right intention and self control.'

On another occasion Padre Pio told him: 'You are bitter — many times you are harsh when reproving the Brothers — surely you could be both polite and mild?'

The other agreed: 'You are right, Padre. I do try to be polite and kind, but when I see it doesn't work, then I lose my temper.'

Another time Padre told the same friar: 'You should be more humble. Pride emanates from every part of you.' 'That's true, Padre,' the other laughingly admitted, 'but how do you overcome pride?'

Padre reflected a moment, then he said: 'I

don't know how the Lord has made me, but I feel I should have to try much harder to make an act of pride than an act of humility because humility is truth and the truth is that I am nothing and all that is good in me is of God. When I see so many people coming to me with requests, I don't think about what I am able to give, but of what I am *unable* to give, so that many souls remain parched with thirst because I have not been able to give them the gift of God.'

Padre Pio added: 'Throw open your heart to love. Guard charity very carefully... We have so much to criticize in ourselves. Why waste time criticizing others?'

Then Padre smiled, 'But cheer up — you are a good fellow all the same. Speak always of God's love, of His power, His glory.'

Signor Frederico Abresch has a bookshop close to the Church of Our Lady of Grace. Once a Protestant, he became a Catholic for the sake of social convenience. He interested himself in magic and Theosophy. When Abresch met Padre Pio he found him to be abrupt. However, Abresch knelt down in the confessional. Padre asked him: 'You failed to reveal many grievous sins in your last confession. Are you going to be honest today?'

'Padre, I believe confession to be an excellent social institution, but I haven't always believed in its supernatural character.' A slight pause, then Abresch added: 'But now, Padre, I believe in it.'

There was a silence, then Padre said: 'That is heresy. Therefore every time you received Communion it was a sacrilege. You must make a general confession. Examine your conscience carefully and recall when you last made a genuine confession. Jesus was more compassionate with you than with Judas.'

Padre left Abresch for a while, then returned to him. 'Now, when was it since you made a genuine confession?' Abresch stammered a reply, but he was interrupted by Padre: 'Very well. It was on your return from your honeymoon. Let us leave it there and start from that moment.'

Abresch was thunderstruck, but he was not given time to reflect on what Padre had said, for now the Capuchin priest began to enumerate all his sins. Padre then said: 'You sang the praises of Satan while Jesus in the infinite tenderness of His love broke His neck for you.' He then absolved the bewildered man who, after receiving absolution went home. Shortly thereafter, he brought his sick wife to see Padre Pio.

'Padre,' she told him, 'the specialists I have seen tell me they must operate on me. What am I to do?'

'My daughter, you are to do as they say.'

The woman burst into tears. 'But Padre, then I will never have children.'

Padre Pio looked heavenwards, then told her gently: 'Well then, no instruments. The rest of your life would be ruined.'

Joyous, the woman returned to her home in Bologna where soon all traces of her malady disappeared. Two years later Padre told her husband that she would bear a son. Despite the prognosis of doctors that this would never happen, the Abreschs had a son, who is now a priest.

Once, a mother of five children asked Padre Pio to watch over her brood. He gave his consent. Five years later the woman came to San Giovanni where she asked Padre Pio: 'Please Padre, do watch over my children, protect them.'

He answered: 'How many times are you going to ask this of me?' Somewhat surprised, she said: 'But, this is the first time...' Padre told her: 'Daily, for the last five years you have been asking me for the same thing.'

One physician had lost his faith. Stubborn and proud, he clung to his atheism.

The day came when he found himself in the presence of Padre Pio. Padre said: 'Tell me, son, do you ever think of your own wretched soul?'

'But of course, Padre, otherwise how could I go on living?'

'With what end in view?'

'For the propagation of the species,' was the answer.

'Unfortunate man! Can't you see how your soul is being destroyed? Now, go.'

With that, Padre placed a hand on the man's mouth. That afternoon, his heart burning within him, the doctor sought out Padre Pio who, upon catching sight of him said: 'Your face is not clean, Genoese. Your home is near the sea, but you don't know how to wash. A stout ship, and no pilot.'

Once again, the man was sent away, tears overflowing his heart. Fr. Francesco comforted him, and led him to Padre's cell, at whose door the friar knocked.

'What is it? Don't make me waste my time. Go downstairs. I'll hear your confession.'

Suddenly, the young man's head was laid on the pierced hands of the priest as he wept bitterly.

Gently, Padre Pio enumerated for him all the sins he had committed — some of them the doctor had forgotten. When Padre was silent, the man burst out: 'Padre, I pray that this suffering of mine, and that my salvation may bring you some measure of comfort.'

'My son,' Padre told him, 'it has indeed been a great comfort. May God bless you for it.'

That night the doctor heard loud knockings on the walls of his room, and against the windows and doors. Terrified, he invoked Padre Pio's help. It came instantly as an unmistakable fragrance filled the room.

Next day Padre told him: 'My son, we don't know what happens down there. You have now in your hands a marvellous bread. Around you are many starving souls.'

'What is it I must do?'

'Cut this bread in slices and distribute it to feed the hungry. In this way you will serve the Lord. And I shall be with you always.'

One of Padre Pio's spiritual children told him she could not bear to be parted from him.

He told her, 'My daughter, for the children of God there is no distance.'

'But it is hard for me, Padre.'

Padre showed her his watch: 'Tell me, what is in the middle there?'

'The pivot, Father.'

'Exactly. The pivot is like God, who is immovable, and the hands circle round, attached to the centre, indicating the time. Between the centre and the numbers there is no distance, because the hands bridge the centre of the hour. God is the centre, the hours are the souls, Padre Pio is one of the hands, forming a bridge from the centre to the hours.'

A Sicilian teacher who was a rationalist said of Padre Pio: 'I personally think, as do other recognised teachers, that we do not believe in this person who, you say, has supernatural powers.'

He was awakened from sleep by a Capuchin monk whom he recognised from photographs. The man rubbed his eyes, mystified:

'Who are you? Are you Padre Pio?'

'I am. Don't be astonished at seeing me. I have come to console and to counsel. I know you are frantically seeking happiness and truth, that is God. Happiness is not to be found in this world...God, you can find, if you want to, but you are on the wrong road because knowledge is useless to reveal HIM WHO IS. My son, science may be great but it is a poor thing, and less than nothing compared with the formidable mystery of the Divine. You must take another path. Purify your heart of every passion — humble yourself to the earth — and pray. In this manner you will constantly find God, who will grant you peace and serenity in this world, and

The highest truth cannot be put into words. Therefore the greatest teacher has nothing to say. He simply gives himself in service, and never worries.

—Lao Tzu

beatitude in the next. I HAVE SPOKEN. I leave you now, for there are other unhappy people who await me to grant them consolation. I bless this house... May Jesus Christ be praised.'

When famous doctors from all over the world came to the inauguration of Padre Pio's hospital in San Giovanni Rotondo, which had been built from funds given by grateful hearts, Padre Pio addressed these men of eminence in his natural, simple way:

'You have the mission of curing the sick, but if at the patient's bedside you bring not the warmth of loving care, I do not think that medicines will be of much use. I have proved this by my own experience: during my illness in 1916-1917, my doctors, whilst curing me, brought me words of consolation. Love cannot do without words. And you yourselves, how could you, other than by words, bring spiritual comfort to a patient? Later on, I went to a specialist who bluntly told me I had tuberculosis and that I only had about another year to live. I returned home, grieved to death, but resigned to God's will. And as you see I am still here. Bring God to the sick; it will be more valuable than any other cure....'

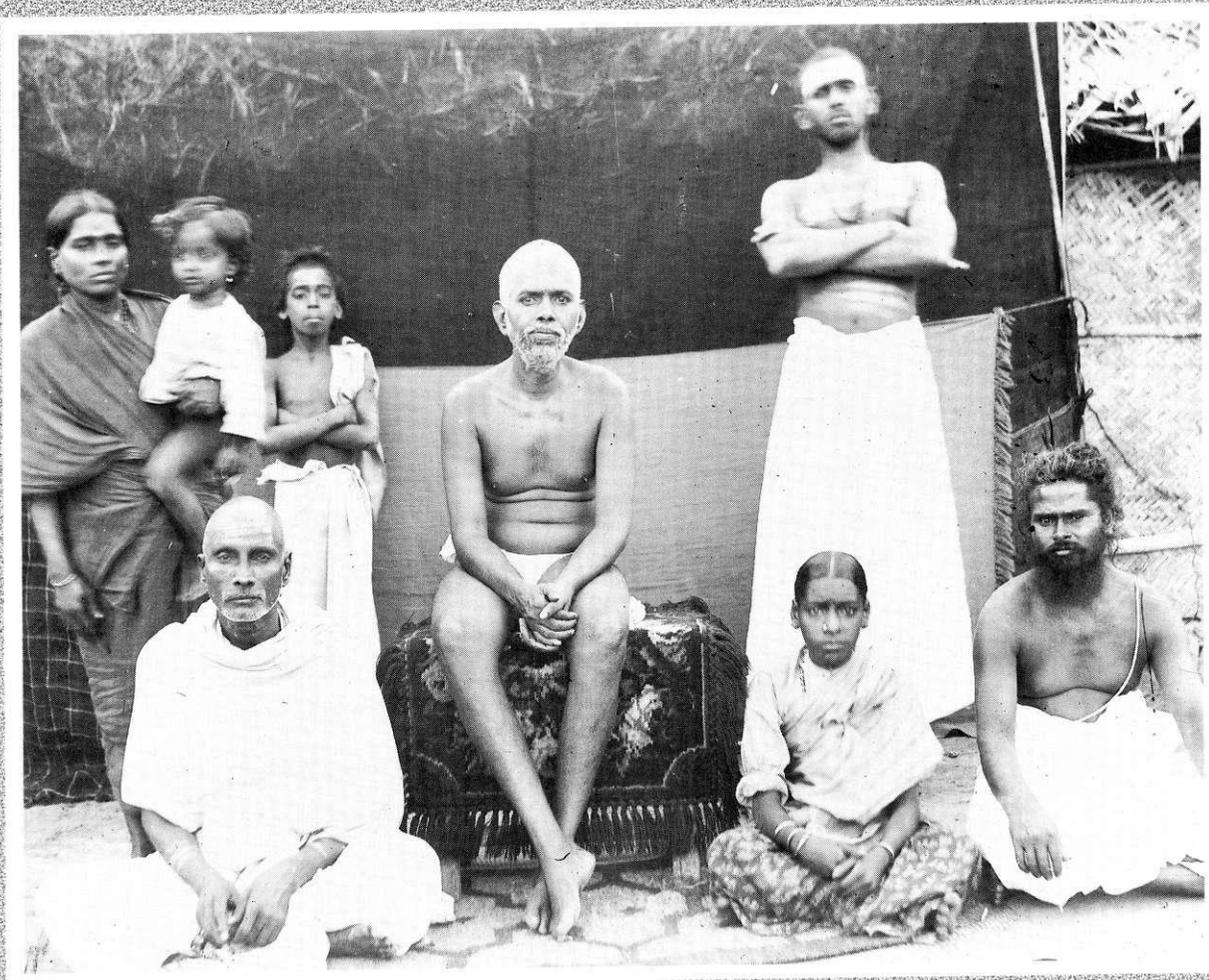
Padre Pio came to us with love. I was one of those privileged to receive his blessings, watch him concelebrate Holy Mass in his unique and marvellous way, revealing the wonder and the mystery of the Divine. The sacred dialogue continues even though the mortal shell has been discarded by Padre Pio these many years. That sacred, wounded Hand binds us to the Centre still.



G. Shanmugam (sitting, extreme left — two family members standing behind), Sri Ramana Maharshi (seated, second from left), Chinna-swami (seated, third from left), Madhava Swami (standing, extreme right)

Contact print from original glass negative on Ilford Multigrade Paper (courtesy, Jim Lemkin, Massachusetts) and toned in Kodak Sepia Toner.

From our **Photographic Archives**
(Renovations by DEV GOGOI)



Early 1930s. Sri Ramana Maharshi (*seated at centre*), Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer (*seated at left*), Smt. Subbalakshmi (*standing at left*) with R. Venkatakrishnan (Jayashree) cradled in her arms.

Contact print from original glass negative enlarged on Agfa Record Rapid Paper (courtesy: Clayton Butterfield, Oxford) and toned in Kodak Sepia Toner.

Silent Speech

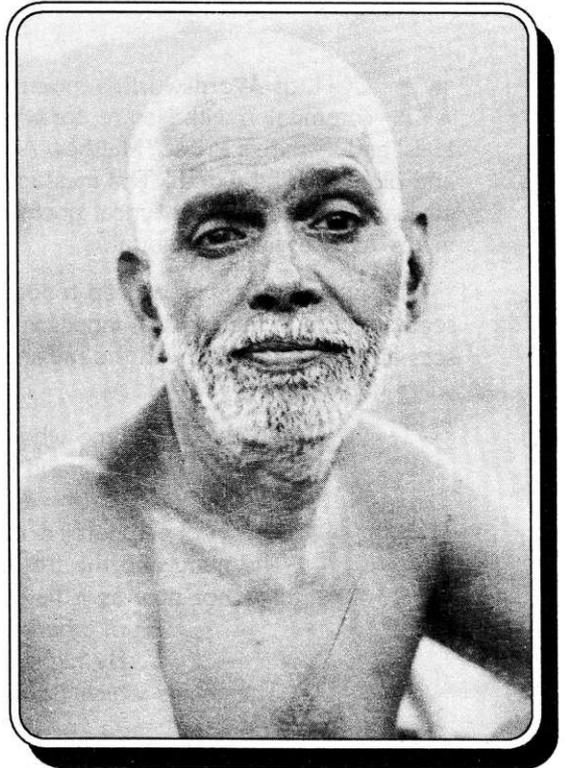
WHEN Bhagavan Sri Ramana was staying in the Virupaksha Cave, a District Collector and a Deputy Collector went there for his *darshan*. After prostrations to Sri Bhagavan, the Collector began to speak, narrating at length all that he had read and done by way of *sadhana*, and at the end confessed that in spite of all that, peace was as far from him as ever before. No sooner had he finished than the Deputy Collector started to tell his story and stopped only after saying all that he had to say. These two conversations took quite a long time, but Sri Bhagavan did not interrupt them even once, observing strict silence all throughout.

Seeing that neither of them got any reply from Sri Ramana, the Collector once again delivered a long harangue and stopped only when he was at the end of his resources. Yet not a word passed from the mouth of Sri Ramana. The Collector was a little put out at this, and drawled out: "We have been speaking to you since long, but you don't open your lips at all! Will you please tell us something at least?"

Then, Sri Bhagavan spoke: "All the while I have been speaking in my own language. What can I do when you won't listen to it?"

The Collector was intelligent and he caught the meaning of Sri Ramana's cryptic reply. He was overpowered with devotion and fell down at the feet of Sri Bhagavan, chanting the following (Sanskrit) verse:

Strange (sight) under the banyan tree!
The disciples are all old and the Guru is
youthful; he expounds (the Truth) in Silence
and the disciples are freed from doubts!



Then both of them sat before Sri Bhagavan in silent meditation. They got the peace they were in search of and departed fully satisfied at the outcome of their visit.

— From *Call Divine*, May 1954

Wordsworth's 'Ode On Immortality'

by N.R.S. Manian

MUCH of Wordsworth's poetry is a record of his mystic experiences of communion with Nature, for which reason he is known as the 'Stripling of the Hills' and 'Nature's Priest.' Matthew Arnold called him 'a priest to us all of the wonder and bloom of the world.' The message of his 'Ode on Immortality,' which has been evaluated as the greatest lyrical poem in the English language by many, is that man in his real nature is immortal.

The poem starts with a deep mood of despondency since the joy experienced on seeing nature in the years of innocent childhood is lost in later years. The child which sees all nature invested with the radiance of celestial light loses this perception, as the years grow:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparell'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream,
It is not now as it hath been of yore;
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
But yet I know, where'er I go
That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth.



The same mood is expressed in the following lines. Only it is accentuated by a sense of wonder as to what has gone wrong:

The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

The reason for this change, that is, the loss of happiness, is that birth itself is 'but a sleep and forgetting'. That is, birth implies forgetfulness of the pure state of existence:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy.

Now follows the most vital portion of the poem which gives a description of the pure state of the child. He is the 'best philosopher' who reads the 'eternal deep'. He is the 'seer blest'. That truth which we strive to find by 'toiling all our lives' is clearly seen by the child. The profundity of emotion and the beauty of diction contained in these lines is unsurpassable:

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy soul's immensity;
 Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
 Thy heritage, though Eye among the blind,
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
 Haunted for ever by the eternal Mind,-
 Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
 On whom those truths do rest
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
 In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
 Thou, over whom thy Immortality
 Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a slave
 A Presence which is not to be put by;

However the poet finds consolation in the fact that the capacity for perception of the truth which was at its zenith in the state of childhood is never totally lost in later years. It is always within man and *cannot* be lost:

Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal silence; truths that wake
 To perish never;
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
 Nor man nor boy
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy
 Can utterly abolish or destroy!
 Hence in a season of calm weather
 Though inland far we be,
 Our souls have sight of the immortal sea
 Which brought us hither;

Man may be overwhelmed by the sense of loss of his original state of purity but still he must cheer up and make the best of it. After all, experiences in life also help development of a philosophic outlook:

We will grieve not, rather find
 Strength in what remains behind;
 In the primal sympathy
 Which having been must ever be,
 In the soothing thoughts that spring
 Out of human suffering;
 In the faith that looks through death
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

The message of the poem that the human spirit is eternal flows from Wordsworth's own transcendental experience in childhood. This recollected in later years is taken by him as an intimation of immortality. Such exposition on the true nature of man as well as the depiction of the interrelation between man and nature — all through the medium of poetry — has led some to believe that Wordsworth has provided an alternative to religion or religious experience in the conventional sense.

Sri Ramana Maharshi once observed: 'God becomes a child and *vice versa*. That means that the *samskaras* are yet latent in the child and thus its innocence is complete. When they are eradicated, even a grown up man becomes a child once again, and thus remains God.' When a devotee remarked that the child creates the 'home' atmosphere, he replied, "Yes. The children are always in the home." We too are there but are dreaming and imagining that we are outside the home.¹

The ode is best understood in terms of these observations by an enlightened sage.

¹ *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*, p. 385, 1994 Edn.

The World Phenomenon According to Janaka

In me who am like an infinite sea, the boat of the world is driven here and there by the wind of its own nature. I remain unaffected.

I am the boundless sea, let the waves of the world rise and fall in it. I am neither increased or diminished thereby.

In me, the infinite ocean, arises the imagined universe. Tranquil and attributeless, my Self abides for ever.

The infinite and ever pure Atman is not in the object, nor is the object in it; free from attachment and desire, ever tranquil, in this truth I abide.

Indeed, I am Consciousness Absolute, and the world is a magic show. The thought of acceptance and rejection does not exist in me.

— *Ashtavakra Gita*, (Ch. VII)

God and the Godhead

by David Godman

The last instalment ended with a discussion of the light of God. The present instalment continues the discussion.

The Light of God (continued)

Returning to Bhagavan's commentary on *Arunachala Ashtakam*, verse six:

The darkness is otherwise known as Original Ignorance (Original Sin). The Light passing through it is called Reflected Light. The Reflected Light on its own merits is commonly known as the Pure Mind [*sattva guna*] or Iswara or God. Iswara is well-known to be unified with Maya; in other words, the Reflected Light is Iswara.

The term Bhagavan used for 'original ignorance' was probably *mula avidya*, meaning the root or source of ignorance, since the same term appears later in Bhagavan's explanation. It is not clear whether Bhagavan himself equated it with 'original sin', for the words in brackets may represent an editorial interpolation. I shall assume here that 'original sin' was intended by Bhagavan, for it presents a good opportunity to explain both Bhagavan's and Eckhart's views on the subject.

The Christian idea of original sin is derived from one of the earliest stories in the Bible. Adam, the first man, and Eve, his wife, lived in a state of grace in the Garden of Eden. When Adam disobeyed God and ate a fruit from the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil,' he and his wife were expelled from the garden. As a further punishment God condemned all of their descendents to be born in a state of sin, that is, they would not be born in a state of grace, pure in the sight of God, but instead would be, right from the womb onwards, in a state of moral contamination. The rite of baptism, usually performed shortly after a Christian child's birth, is a ritual designed to wash away the sin that the

baby was born with. This baptism alone is not enough to keep the newly-born soul pure. Christianity teaches that man's nature is inherently sinful and that all people, no matter how hard they try to be pure and holy, repeatedly commit sins. One remains in a state of sin until one has repented for one's wrong-doing and asked for God's forgiveness.

The physical incarnation of Jesus Christ and His subsequent crucifixion gave man, according to Christianity, a chance to escape from the consequences of his inherent sinfulness. At the heart of Christian teaching lies the belief that God sacrificed His only Son, making Him suffer on the cross, so that man would no longer be doomed to a sinful life, separated from God. Jesus is held to have suffered vicariously on the cross for all the sins of mankind. Christians therefore teach that everyone who believes that Christ died in order to free them from the consequences of their sinful life is 'saved'. That is to say, those who accept that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and their personal saviour have their sins wiped out, live in a state of grace acceptable to God, and eventually join Him in heaven at the end of their earthly life. Those who do not accept this continue to reap the consequences of their sins. Original sin and man's inherent sinfulness make him live sinfully; if he dies in that state without having accepted Jesus Christ as the one Person who can redeem him, he goes to hell and remains there for the rest of eternity.

This is a rather generalised and simplistic view of Christianity's central doctrine because a detailed elaboration of this point lies outside the scope of this article. There are innumerable sects and denominations which have slightly different interpretations of this subject, but virtually all of

The Perfect Question

Wei Wu Wei

What Question?

WHO AM I?

Who is asking?

I am.

Is not that also the PERFECT ANSWER.

* * * *

Every sentient-being, being sentient, perceives;

Therefore

Every sentient-being may *apperceive*,

And so-doing is aware of what it is.

* * * *

Whatever Sri Bhagavan said was almost certainly true,

And if he had said, or did say, exactly the opposite,

That would have been true also.

Why is this so? It is so because what appears to be true relatively can never be true Absolutely, and what is true Absolutely appears relatively to be false because, relatively, it cannot be apprehended.

them incorporate in their doctrines the idea of original sin and the idea that Christ came to liberate mankind from its consequences.

To be in a state of sin is to be separated from God. If one accepts this definition, one can find an interesting parallel between *mula avidya*, the source of ignorance, and original sin. At death the *vasanas* withdraw into the Heart, says Bhagavan, before sprouting again and taking on a new form. It is these *vasanas*, inherited from the *karmas* of past lives, that rise up in the new body and in the 'whirl of *prarabdha*' reflect the light of the Self, and in so doing create the world, the observer of it and the feeling the observer has that he is separate from God. (*Prarabdha karma* is the sequence of actions,

picked by Iswara, that one has to undergo in this life; the 'whirl of *prarabdha*' is the graphic term Bhagavan uses to describe its operation in *Arunachala Ashtakam*, verse six.) Thus, in the same way that original sin appears, at conception, as a consequence of acts done countless generations before, so too *mula avidya* is the product of countless lifetimes. Though original sin is not a consequence of one's own previous actions, in both cases, a dark cloud envelops the soul, obscuring the Light of God and the natural feeling of union with Him.

What did Eckhart, as a practising Christian, think of the doctrine of original sin? Rather predictably, he ignored the traditional teachings of the Church and took a lofty *advaitic* stance. 'All

that is not within Being, but beside or outside Being, is not,¹ he declares.

This leads to an interesting but inevitable conclusion:

Therefore, because evil is opposed to Being, evil does not exist. The devil is not, in so far as he is the evil one. Hence the sinner, the son of the devil, is nothing.²

When Eckhart says that something is 'nothing', he is not merely disparaging it, he is saying, quite literally, it does not exist; it does not have being, the only mark of true existence. Therefore, says Eckhart, 'No man may say at any time that he is apart from God, either because of his faults, or infirmities or anything else.'³ God, as being, does not concede the existence of sin or of anything else that might be considered to be apart from Him:

Neither does God know anything outside himself, but his eye is fixed only on himself. Therefore God does not see us if we are in sin. Hence God knows us as far as we are without sin.⁴

This is analogous to Bhagavan's often repeated comment that he saw no *ajnanis* around him, only *jnanis*. Everyone is Self-realised in the sight of God.

Since original sin is merely the illusion that one is separate from God, all one has to do, according to Eckhart, is to face God instead of the world and let His radiant Light wash away the source of sin, the feeling of separation.

The true penitence is to face about toward our beloved God, with unwavering affection, so that all that we think about and delight in is pregnant with him. However you accomplish this is the way for you, and the more you do it, the more real your penitence or penance will be, the more your sins will be washed away, together with the pain of them.⁵

The moment one makes contact with God in this way, 'sins' automatically vanish, for in that eternal now-moment, one is free of the illusory

past and all the sinful acts committed in it: 'God is the God of the present; as He finds him, so He takes him and accepts him, not for what he has been, but for what he is now.'⁶

Facing God, turning towards the Self instead of looking outwards at the world, is a key point in both Bhagavan's and Eckhart's teachings. By turning towards the Self and becoming one with it, everything that is 'not-Self' vanishes:

When the mind, which is subtle, is externalised via the brain and the sense organs, names and forms, which are gross, appear. When it abides in the Heart, names and forms disappear. Keeping the mind in the Heart, not allowing it to go out, is called *ahamukham* [facing the Self], or *antar-mukham* [facing inwards]. Allowing it to go out is *bahirmukham* [facing outwards]. When the mind abides in the Heart in this way, the 'I', the root of all thoughts, vanishes. [Having vanished,] the ever-existing Self alone will shine. The state where not even the slightest trace of the thought 'I' remains is alone *swarupa* [one's real nature].⁷

So, original sin is merely the ingrained idea that one is separate from God. By facing God instead of the world, the sense of separation, the feeling 'I am the body', drops off. When this separate 'I' perishes in the Heart, sin is definitively ended:

Once the sage [Bhagavan] was asked about the Christian doctrine of original sin — that every man is born in sin and can be delivered from it by faith in Jesus Christ; he replied: 'The sin is said to be in man; but there is no manhood in sleep; manhood comes on waking, along with the thought "I

¹ Latin sermon IV, 1. From Ancelet-Hustache.

² *In Sapientiam* V, 1. From Ancelet-Hustache.

³ *Talks of Instruction*, 16.

⁴ *In hoc apparuit*....

⁵ *Talks of Instruction*, 16.

⁶ *Talks of Instruction*, 12.

⁷ *Who am I?*, paragraph 6, essay version.

am the body"; this thought is the real original sin; it must be removed by the death of the ego, after which the thought will not arise.⁸

I should like now to return to Bhagavan's explanation of verse six of his *Ashtakam*. In the last paragraph I quoted he concluded by saying, 'the Reflected Light (*chidabhasa*) is Iswara,' and that 'the Reflected Light on its own merits is commonly known as the Pure Mind or Iswara'. In the next paragraph he elaborates on this theme:

The other name — Pure Mind — implies impure mind only;⁹ it is the *rajasic* or active mind; this too can be projected from the former *sattvic* mind through another reflection only. Thus the ego is the product of the second darkness (*avidya*).

I think that what Bhagavan is saying here is that the original ignorance, *mula avidya*, is the dense, shadowy, atom-like cloud of ego-plus-*vasanas*. When the light is reflected off it, a second level of ignorance (*avidya*) arises. It is dependent on the *mula avidya* and causes the *rajastic* ego, the sense of personal identity to arise. Bhagavan continued:

Then comes the *tamas* or the dull mind in the shape of *antahkaranas*; this appears as the world... the waking, dream and sleep state have their origin in original Darkness (*mula avidya*). ... In the Self-shining Pure Being this *shakti* cannot be seen. Nevertheless Her actions are only too well-known. How sublime! From Her sublime original activity (i.e., power vibrating) *sattva*-filled reflection results; from it the *rajastic* ego; then *tamasic* thought-forms which are commonly known as knowledge, or the light corresponding to the magnifying lens. Just as the artificial light is reflected through the lens onto the screen, so also the reflected light passes through thought (the magnifier) before expanding as the world beyond it;

furthermore, thought, itself the world in seed form, seems to be the whole external world. Such is the extraordinary power! In this way Iswara, individual and the world are only of the Reflected Light, having the Self-shining Supreme Being for the substratum.

Verse six of the *Ashtakam* begins by saying that the Heart, the Light of Consciousness, the one reality, alone exists, and that within it there is a mysterious power (*shakti*) which is, at the same time, one with It but not independent or apart from It. The middle section of the verse explains how this *shakti* causes the appearance of the world to rise. The verse concludes by saying, 'Whether they [the world pictures] stop or whether they continue, they do not exist apart from You [Arunachala, the Heart]'. There is an alternative reading for this final line. The Tamil phrase *ninai vida indre*, here translated as 'they do not exist apart from you,' can also be taken to mean 'they are not to be thought of'. This gives an added dimension to the verse. Bhagavan is not merely stating that the world picture is an appearance in the Self, he is also saying that one should not pay any attention to it. As I have noted on several occasions already, when one withdraws attention from the world and puts it on the substratum, the Self, the world picture vanishes.

The whole of this verse is a very precise description of how *shakti* arises in the motionless Self and then generates Iswara, the individual soul and the world.

(To be continued)

⁸ *Maha Yoga*, 1973, p.189.

⁹ I think it should read 'as well' rather than 'only'. Bhagavan appears to be saying that if one posits the existence of a pure mind (*sattva guna*) one must also concede the existence of an impure *rajastic* mind. The subsequent lines indicate that this is what he is implying.

Space, Time and Self

By Swami Madhavtirtha

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 subject and how I based my arguments on a wrong presumption. He explained to me the correct viewpoint at some length. My purpose in writing that book was to prove that the concept of *maya* as propounded by Sri Sankara is fully borne out by the modern theory of relativity. This theory, as is well known, maintains that time and space are purely relative notions dependent entirely on the conditions governing the observer and the object under observation and that 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 will conflict with each other and necessarily vitiate any conclusion they may arrive at concerning the particular event. Sri Maharshi pointed out to me that the very presumption of two observers being situated at two given points is itself an unwarranted one. That is, taking for granted that there are two individual observers, the notion of relativity must itself apply to the space-measure separating 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 in the treatment of the concept of *maya*; 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 as that of relativity, proceeding entirely on the basis of his own experience of the Absolute.

Verse 18 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." This is perfect spiritual experience and dispels all false notions about time and space. Time is not an objective reality with a beginning and an end. The very idea of attributing a beginning or an end to time is something absurd and fantastic, since what preceded and followed the beginning and end of time must also come within the time-span. The approach to the problem of time as described by verse 18 does away with past and future, the only reality being the eternal present. But such a description of the one reality as the ever-present and changeless Self, demands of the earnest seeker the faith and conviction that the realisation of his perfection must be here and now and not in some remote future. Moralists are never tired of pointing out to some distant future as the golden age to come, preceded by a long process of evolution. Perhaps it is this kind of "progress-worship" that is really responsible for the enormous moral inequity we find in modern society, for the ruthless exploitation of innocent peoples during the so-called peaceful times and the wholesale destruction of life and property during the upheavals of war. For are we not told that the moral progress of the world is the special concern of the exploiting nations and that global warfare is the sure means for establishing peace? The end is made to justify the means, and this end recedes eternally before an unending evolution towards progress! These moralists do not show when and where their "progress" will end.

From an article by the author in supplement to the First Edition of *The Golden Jubilee Souvenir* (1949).

The Various Texts of 'Who am I?' — 3

by Michael James

Text AS

On pages 98 to 114 of the same notebook (SP-20) in which the earliest manuscript of text A is found (see *The Mountain Path*, Aradhana issue 1994, p. 38), Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai has noted many other sayings of Sri Bhagavan under the heading 'Sri Ramana Maharshigalin Upadesa Mozhigal' (Sri Ramana Maharshi's Words of Instruction). Many of these sayings were later included in the various printed and unprinted versions of *Nan Yar?*, worded either in the same or in a similar manner, but some are not found elsewhere. These sayings are divided into 21 passages dated 30.12.22, plus an additional 2 passages numbered 5 (a) and 5 (b), which are dated 31.12.22.

Since these sayings can be regarded as a supplement to text A, I shall refer to them as text AS. On reading texts A and AS we can notice that between them they contain almost all the ideas found in the present-day printed versions of *Nan Yar?* One idea which is not found in these two texts, however, is the simile of the pearl-diver tying a stone to his waist and diving deep to take the pearl lying at the bottom of the ocean, but this simile is found in lines 61-66 of *Anugraha Ahaval* (a translation of which is given on p. 145 of *The Mountain Path*, Jayanthi issue 1993) and was also included soon afterwards in the answer to question 15 of text B. In addition to this simile, many of the ideas contained in the last three paragraphs of text F do not appear in texts A and AS, but are all nevertheless found in text E and also in some other early versions.

The following is a literal translation of text AS:

Sri Ramana Maharshi's Words of Instruction

1. **Just as the spider spins out the thread from within itself and again withdraws it into itself, in the very same manner the mind also projects the world from within itself and again absorbs it into itself.**
2. *One day when, surrounded by some Madras gentlemen, Brahmasri Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastrigal asked Sri Maharshi what His experience was, He replied to that as seen below:-*

"That which is called 'I' (nan) having gone, that which is called 'Self' (tan)

shines. Sometimes the universe itself does not appear." (nan=ahankaram; tan=swarupam.)

3. **The mind stands only by always grasping [literally, following] something gross. Separately it does not stand. The mind alone is called the subtle body (sukshma sarira) and soul (jiva).**
4. *The path by which to investigate¹ and know the nature of the mind:—*

What rises in the body as 'I', that is the mind. It is necessary to investigate and know in which place the thought 'I' first rises in the body. That

place alone is the abode (*iruppidam*) of the mind. That itself is called the heart (*hridayam*)². Only in that place do anger, fear and so on first arise³. Even if one always goes on saying 'Who am I? Who am I?' it will take to that place⁴. Of all the thoughts which appear in the mind, the thought 'I' alone is the first thought. Only after this thought rises do other thoughts rise. Only after the first person appears do the second and third persons appear. Without the first person, the second and third persons do not exist⁵.

5. *The path by which to cling unceasingly to the investigation 'Who am I?':—*

If other thoughts rise, without endeavouring to complete them one should investigate to whom they rose. However much thoughts rise, so what? As soon as each thought rises, one should vigilantly investigate 'to whom has this risen?' If one investigates thus, it will be clear 'to me'. If one investigates 'Who am I?' the mind will return to its abode (*iruppidam*). The thought which rose will also subside. When one again and again practices thus, the power of the mind to stand remaining in its abode will go on increasing. When the mind goes out through the brain and sense-organs, names and forms (that is, thoughts) appear. When the mind remains in the heart, which is its abode, names and forms disappear. Keeping the mind in the heart without letting it go out is alone named 'I-ward facing' (*ahamukham*) or 'inward facing' (*antarmukham*). Letting it go out from the heart is alone named 'outward facing' (*bahirmukham*). When the mind thus remains in the heart, all thoughts other than the thought 'Who am I?' will subside. Afterwards

even the thought 'Who am I?' [that is, the effort made to attend to 'I'] will subside. When that subsides, that which is the ever-existing reality (*vastu*) will shine. That which is called 'I' (*nan*) having gone, that which is called Self (*tan*) will shine. Doing mind-restraint (*mano-nigraha*) thus alone is *tapas*. This alone is one's work. He who does his work will not attend to the work of others. One should not give room to slipping away from the thought of one's own Self (*swatma-chintana*). However much be the duties (activities) one must do, when the time appropriate for them passes, all the other time one should do only Self-investigation (*atma-vichara*). Even when one is sitting, when one is standing and when one is walking one can do Self-investigation,

¹ In this and the subsequent articles in this series, wherever the word *vichara* or its verbal form is used in Tamil, I shall translate it as 'investigation' or 'investigate' rather than 'enquiry' or 'enquire', since I feel the former conveys more accurately and clearly the sense in which this word is actually used by Sri Bhagavan in His teachings. That is, though in English the words 'enquire' and 'investigate' are very close in meaning, the word 'enquire' tends more to convey the sense of questioning or asking, whereas the word 'investigate' conveys in a clearer manner the sense of scrutinizing or attending very keenly in order to know by direct experience, which is actually what Sri Bhagavan expects us to do.

² See passage 19 below.

³ This idea is not found in any of the printed versions of *Nan Yar?* but is found in an expanded form in the third paragraph of the answer to question 8 in text C, where Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai records in English, "It is the place where emotions, such as pride, anger, fear, sexual passion etc. are first felt".

⁴ This same sentence, either with or without the word 'always' (*sada*), is also found in other early versions of *Nan Yar?* such as text D, answer to question 7(2), and text E, answer to question 9. But when Sri Bhagavan rewrote *Nan Yar?* in the form of an essay (text F), He refined the idea expressed here by writing, "Even if one goes on thinking 'I, I', it will take to that place".

⁵ In the original manuscript Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai has added here in English within brackets, "Without the 1st person there can't be 2nd or 3rd persons".

can one not? If the mind happens to forget the investigation 'Who am I?' due to the tastes for sense-perceptions (*vishaya-vasanas*), when that investigation again comes to memory, one should make effort to remain without leaving it⁶. However great a sinner one may be, if one goes on lamenting and weeping, "I am a great sinner. How can I be saved?" his being saved is difficult. Whoever gives up the thought that he is a sinner and has perseverance in Self-investigation (*swarupa-vichara*), he alone will be saved. The thought of one's own Self (*swa-swarupa-chintana*) should exist without ceasing (*nirantaram*). That alone is sufficient. If it is a question of going forwards, however fast one may run one can run. Running backwards is very difficult. Similarly the mind becoming 'I-ward facing' (*ahamukham*) is difficult⁷. By Self-investigation done without interruption bondage to the body (*deha-bandham*) will cease. After one has known oneself, however much thoughts arise he will not get bondage⁸.

6. *The help which God and Guru render to jivas:—*

God and Guru will only show the path to attain liberation (*mukti*) but cannot of their own accord⁹ establish *jivas* in liberation. Each one should by his own effort act in accordance with the path which God or Guru has shown and attain liberation. It is necessary to know oneself only by one's own eye of knowledge (*jnana-kan*); instead, how is it possible to know by someone else? To know oneself as oneself is a mirror necessary? To know 'I am Devadattan' there is no other requirement (*apeksha*). Similarly to know oneself as oneself there is also not any requirement¹⁰.

7. *The uselessness of investigation of the principles (tattvas):—*

Just as there is no benefit in one who should sweep up and discard a barber's rubbish, forsaking to discard that rubbish all together, counting that there are so many hairs in it and scrutinizing their length, colour and so on, so there is no benefit in one who has desire for liberation, instead of all together collectively discarding all of the *tattvas*, which are other than himself and concealing himself, counting that the *tattvas* are so many

⁶ The important ideas expressed in this and the preceding six sentences are not found in any of the printed versions of *Nan Yar?*, though the idea in the third of these seven sentences is also found in text D, stray saying 14.

⁷ The ideas expressed in these three sentences, which are not found in any printed version, are also expressed in a slightly more developed manner in both text C, stray saying 14, and text D, stray saying 1.

⁸ See the same idea expressed in text D, answer to question 8. Compare also *Guru Vachaka Kovai* verse 944, in which Sri Bhagavan says, 'Whatever thoughts may arise, due to the fact that they cannot come into existence without the indispensable Self, not succumbing to negligence (*pramada*) which expresses [itself in the form of the false notion], 'Alas, in the midst [of these thoughts] the state of Self has slipped away', is also that [the greatness of *granthi-bheda*, the severance of the knot of ignorance or identification with the body]".

⁹ "Of their own accord" (*tamahave*): that is, unless the *jiva* earnestly longs for liberation and prays to them for their help. God or Guru will never force liberation, which is the destruction of the individuality, upon any *jiva* who does not sincerely and whole-heartedly want it, but they will certainly not fail to bestow their gracious, all-powerful and ever-unfailing help upon those *jivas* who earnestly seek it, thereby enabling them to turn within and attain liberation. In this context we should bear in mind the assurance given by Sri Bhagavan in other texts of *Nan Yar?*, "However much burden we place upon God, He bears all of it", which means that however unfit and incapable we may feel ourself to be, if we rely entirely upon the Grace of God or Guru they will surely bear the burden and responsibility of establishing us in the state of liberation.

¹⁰ That is, there is not any need of the aid of anything other than one's own Self-consciousness "I am", which ever exists and shines by its own light.

and investigating their qualities and actions. It is necessary to consider the universe like a dream.

8. *The uselessness of scriptures for mumukshus [aspirants for liberation] :—*

Every scripture says that it is necessary to make the mind subside. Therefore, after knowing that mind-restraint (*mano-nigraha*) alone is the intention of the scriptures, what is the benefit in reading the scriptures again and again? For making the mind subside, it is necessary to investigate who one is. Therefore, instead of investigating and knowing who is oneself, who exists within the five sheaths (*pancha-kosas*), liking to know oneself through scriptures is only futile. All the scriptures that have been read will at one time end up having to be forgotten.

9. *What is happiness? Does it exist in Self? Does it exist in the objects of the world?*

What is called happiness (*sukham*) is the very nature of Self. Happiness and Self-happiness are not different. Self-happiness (*atma-sukham*) alone exists. That alone is what is real. Happiness is not obtainable in even one of the objects of the world. We think that happiness is obtained from them due to our wrong discrimination (*avivekam*). In truth, whenever our intentions are fulfilled, the mind, returning to its proper place (*yatha-sthanam*), experiences Self-happiness alone. Similarly, in sleep, in swoon, when desired objects are obtained, and when harm occurs to disliked objects, the mind becoming inward-facing (*antarmukham*) experiences Self-happiness alone. In this way the mind wanders without rest, going outside leaving Self, and returning within. When it comes outside, it

experiences misery (*dukkham*). When it returns within, it experiences happiness (*sukham*). At the foot of the tree the shade is blissful. Outside the sun's heat is scorching. A person who is wandering outside moves into the shade and feels cool. After a brief while he stirs outside, and, unable to bear the scorching of the heat, again comes beneath the tree. In this manner he is engaged in going from the shade into the sunshine, and in moving from the sunshine into the shade. He who acts thus is a person devoid of discrimination. A person who has discrimination, on the other hand, does not leave the shade. Similarly, the mind of the sage (*jnani*) does not leave *Brahman*. But the mind of the ignorant person (*ajnani*), on the other hand, is engaged in roaming in the world and suffering, and in returning in *Brahman* for a brief while and enjoying happiness. As that which is called 'I' (*nan*) subsides more and more, that which is called Self (*tan*) will come out [that is, will become manifest]. (That is, as the mind subsides more and more, happiness will increase.) Though that which is called Self is the ever-existing reality (*vastu*), if that which is called 'I' sinks, it appears as if it were manifesting in the open.

10. *Jnana-drishti:—*

Being still (*summa iruppadu*) alone is named 'knowledge-sight' (*jnana-drishti*). Being still is only making the mind to subside in Self. Other than this, knowing the thoughts of others, knowing the three times, knowing what is happening in distant places, and so on, are not *jnana-drishti*.

11. *Desirelessness:— What is the connection between desirelessness (nirasa) and knowledge (jnana)?*

Desirelessness itself is knowledge. Desirelessness and knowledge are not different. What is called knowledge is being (*iruppadu*) without any object appearing. What is called desirelessness is being (*iruppadu*) without the mind moving towards any object¹¹.

12. What is the difference between investigation (*vichara*) and meditation (*dhyana*)?

Meditation is imagining (*bhavippadu*) oneself as the absolute reality (*brahman*) and as existence-consciousness-bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*). Investigation is being (*iruppadu*) having the mind kept only in itself [or only in its own place], that is, only in Self (*atma*).

13. If it is said 'giving the soul to God', what is the meaning?

Being (*iruppadu*) without giving room to the rising of any thought other than the thought of Self (*atma-chintana*) is alone giving [surrendering] the soul to God.

14. If it is said 'liberation' (*mukti*), what is the meaning?

Destruction of the tendencies (*vasanakshaya*) is alone liberation¹². Investigating and knowing who is the person who is in bondage, is alone liberation. Knowing one's true nature (*yathartha swarupa*) is alone liberation.

15. Since one supreme ruling power (*parameswara shakti*) is performing all activities, instead of us also submitting to it, thinking constantly 'To act in this way is necessary, to act in that way is necessary' is mere vanity¹³. In spite of seeing that the steam-power in the train is bearing all the burdens, why should we who

travel in it, instead of placing even our small luggage in it and being happily at ease, suffer by bearing it upon our head?

16. Is the mind two, a good mind and a bad mind?

The mind is only one. The tendencies (*vasanas*) are of two kinds, auspicious (*subha*) and inauspicious (*asubha*). When the mind is under the sway of auspicious tendencies it is said to be a good mind, and when it is under the sway of inauspicious tendencies, a bad mind.

17. 'I' (*aham*). 'I' is two. One is the 'I' which truly exists (*yatharthamayulla aham*). This is Self (*atma-swarupam*). The other one is that which rises and subsides. This is the ego (*ahankaram*). The meaning of *ahankaram* is *seyyappatta aham* [the 'I' which is made, produced, created or fabricated]¹⁴.

¹¹ When Sri Bhagavan wrote text F, He refined these two sentences (which also appear in text B, answer to question 22, text D, answer to question 20, and text E, answer to question 25) thus: "Being without attending to what-is-other (*anya*) in non-attachment (*vairagya*) or desirelessness (*nirasa*); being without leaving Self is knowledge (*jnana*)". Compare also text C, answer to question 20, and note that in text G, answer to question 26, the old version of these two sentences has been given along with Sri Bhagavan's refined version.

¹² After this sentence Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai has written in grantha script within brackets the Sanskrit words, "*Vasana muktam muktih*", meaning, 'Release from *vasanas* is *mukti*'.

¹³ In this text this sentence ends with the emphatic statement "*chintippadavame*", meaning 'thinking is mere vanity' (*avam* means vanity, futility, uselessness, emptiness, nothingness or evil), whereas in all the printed versions of *Nan Yar?* this same sentence ends with the rhetorical question "*chintippaden?*", meaning 'why to think?' which clearly implies the futility or vanity of thinking thus.

¹⁴ This passage about the two 'I's is not found in any of the printed texts but is found slightly differently phrased in text D, answer 24, and in text C, stray saying 11.

18. **Just as that which has been caught in the jaws of a tiger does not return, so those who have been caught in the sight of Guru's grace will be saved¹⁵ by Him and will never instead be forsaken. He who is Guru will be seeing [attentively awaiting the time] when the disciple will become mature. At the time he becomes mature, He will see [by just] one glance. Then except that disciple everyone else will vanish as if they had been burnt by fire. He will place such a matured disciple as equal (*samam*) with Himself¹⁶.**
19. **Heart (hridayam):— From where thoughts all arise, that alone is the Heart. Therefore Self (*atma-swarupam*) alone is the Heart. Yet they speak of the heart in many ways saying that it is a lump of flesh (*mamsa-pindam*), that it has a form like a lotus bud, and that it has the shape of a wheel (*chakrakaram*)¹⁷.**
- "Vidhampadum ulandorum viseda variavayut"* etc. etc. Brahma Gitai¹⁸.
20. **Just as whether the cart-driver is awake or whether he is asleep the bullocks go on pulling the cart, so whether our liking (*iccha*) exists or whether it has ceased our *karuvis* [instruments, that is, our mental faculties, sense-organs and organs of action] perform their respective actions. Just as even when the cart-driver restrains the bullocks, transgressing him they [sometimes] overturn the cart, in the same way however much we restrain it our mind also will sometimes go [its own way] transgressing us. Insanity (*chitta-bhramat*) is an example for this.**
21. **On hearing that someone called Balayananda Swami¹⁹ had spat on the**

body of Maharishigal for the fault of Maharishigal not telling Pazhani Swami, who was one among the devotees, to go away from Virupaksha cave in accordance with his [Balyananda's] word, a person called Kambali Swami asked Maharishigal, "What did you do on that occasion?" To that Maharishigal replied as seen below:—

¹⁵ The word used here is "*rakshikkappaduvar*" meaning 'will be saved', but while writing text F, Sri Bhagavan significantly added a stress by writing "*rakshikkappaduvare*", which conveys the sense 'will surely be saved'.

¹⁶ The last four sentences of passage 18, and also all of passages 19 and 20, were not included in either of the earliest two printed versions, texts B and E, which is possibly the reason why they were not included by Sri Bhagavan in text F.

¹⁷ Compare text C, second paragraph of answer to question 8, where Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai records in English: "The seat of mind is Atma-sorupam. It is also known as Heart. The heart is not the blood-vessel, which is popularly spoken of as heart".

¹⁸ This incomplete quotation from Tattvaraya Swamigal's Tamil rendering of the *Brahma Gita* is the first line of ch. 6, v. 10 (which corresponds to *sloka* 17 of the Sanskrit original, which forms part of the fourth *kanda* of the *Suta Samhita* in the *Skanda Purana*). The meaning of the first two lines of this Tamil verse, which alone are relevant in this context, is, "Due to His benevolently existing and shining as the special knowledge in each heart, which appear diverse [that is, as the peerless, pure, adjunctless, single and indivisible Self-consciousness 'I am' in the heart of each *jiva*, who appear to be different from one another], they [the people who know the truth] call God Himself as the Heart". Compare verse 2 of Sri Arunachala *Pancharatnam*, in which Sri Bhagavan addresses Arunachala and sings, "...Since You dance eternally in the heart as 'I', they say that Your name itself is Heart". See also the *Chandogya Upanishad* 8.8.3, where it is said, "This *atman* verily is in the heart...hence it is the heart..."

¹⁹ Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai has written this swami's name as Balayananda, but probably it should read Balyananda. This incident of his spitting upon the body of Sri Bhagavan was also recorded in ch. 19 of the first edition of *Self-Realisation* and is narrated by Arthur Osborne on p. 65 of *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*.

"I was just laughing. Merely a body which has been spat upon so many times!"²⁰

30/12/22 MS²¹

5(a). *The help which arises to Self-investigation (atma-vichara) by breath-restraint (pranayama), meditation upon a form of God (murti-dhyana) and repetition of sacred words (mantra-japa):—*

Even by *pranayama* the mind will subside. However, so long as the breath (*prana*) remains subsided the mind also will remain subsided, and when the *prana* comes out the mind also will come out and wander under the sway of the tendencies (*vasanas*). Since the rising-place (*utpattisthana*) both of the *prana* and of the mind is only one, when the mind subsides the *prana* also will subside, and when the *prana* subsides the mind also will subside. The *prana* is spoken of as the gross form of the mind. Until the time of death the mind keeps the *prana* in the body, and when the body dies it seizes and takes the *prana* away. Therefore *pranayama* will be an aid for restraining the mind. But by *pranayama* alone the mind does not attain destruction (*nasam*). Restraining the breath is indeed good.

Murti-dhyana and *mantra-japa* are also aids for restraining the mind. By them the mind attains one-pointedness (*ekagram*). The mind will be ever moving like the trunk of an elephant. Just as if one gives a chain in the trunk of an elephant it will proceed holding on to that alone without catching hold of anything else, so if

one habituates the mind also to some one form or name it will be holding on to that alone. Because the mind expands as limitless thoughts, each thought becomes extremely weak. As thoughts subside more and more, the mind attains strength. For the mind which has thus attained a one-pointed nature, *atma-vichara* will easily be accomplished.

5(b). *The help to atma-vichara by food-discipline (ahara-niyama).*

By moderate quantities of pure food (*mitamana sattvika ahara*) the *sattva*-quality of the mind increases and help arises for *atma-vichara*. Among all the *niyamas* [restraints or disciplines], *ahara-niyama* indeed is the best.

MS/31-12-22

(To be continued)

²⁰ The Tamil words spoken by Sri Bhagavan were: "Nan sirttukkonde yirunden. Ettanaiyo taram tuppiyumizhnda dehan dane!" The words 'tuppiyumizhnda deham', which literally mean 'spat body', would normally be taken to mean 'a body which has been spat upon', but could also be taken to mean 'a body which has been spat out'. Thus a deep inner meaning can be seen in these words of Sri Bhagavan. That is, not only had His body been spat upon so many times by others, but it was also a body which He Himself had spat out, that is, had rejected as not 'I'. Just as we would be unconcerned when we see someone spitting upon a lump of earth, because we know that that earth is not 'I' and has no connection with us, so Sri Bhagavan was quite unconcerned when anyone spat upon His body, because He clearly knew that that body was not 'I' or 'mine' and had no connection with Himself. Such was the unshakably firm knowledge or *dridha jnana* which shone in every thought, word and deed of Sri Bhagavan.

²¹ MS are the initials of Sri M. Sivaprakasam Pillai, which he sometimes wrote along with the date at the foot of his notes.

The Human Side of a Jnani

By Ramamani

ONCE Abraham Lincoln got into a ditch to help a struggling pig out of it and dirtied his body and clothes. Lincoln said that his own pain on seeing the suffering of the animal was intense and it was more to relieve this than that of the animal that he jumped in to help. Lincoln's explanation is even more remarkable than his act, as it reveals spiritual development of a high order. But spirituality implies much more than compassion, much more than suffering with sufferers or feeling in oneself the suffering of others. When one is conscious of nothing but Oneness and sees nothing whatever apart from one, one is at the end of the spiritual journey. In that state there are no 'others' and no 'suffering'. He who sees in oneself all else and sees oneself in all else is called a *jnani*. Lord Krishna declared in the *Gita* that He regards the *jnani* as His own self.

Jnana therefore is the highest state of spiritual illumination and one cannot know what it is to be a *jnani* except by being one. But the life of such a person and his dealings with others can convey much. It shows that the human frame and faculties put to proper use will enable one to transcend human limitations. To see Sri Ramana's various acts of kindness, his great simplicity and above all his attitude of perfect equality with others is to know that far from being isolated acts these represent basically the best possible harmony with the rest of the world

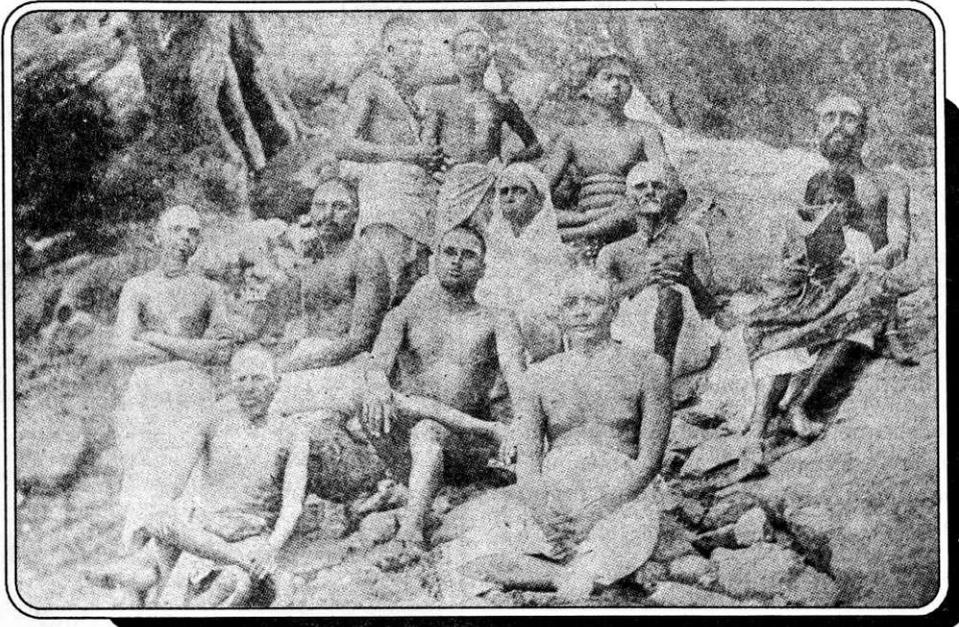
flowing from the highest spiritual development. A *jnani* can therefore be as humorous, as simple or in other ways as human as the rest and this does not detract from his enlightenment.

Sri Ramana never regarded himself as a special person and therefore rejected anything specially offered to him. This was particularly so in matters of food. A devotee from Kanpur had once sent to the Asramam several tins of *chyavanprash* specially prepared by himself at great cost for Bhagavan's use. Remarking that if it was good for him it ought to be good for others as well, Sri Ramana had the whole lot distributed to all people along with early morning breakfast, taking his share and nothing more. Instead of Sri Ramana using it over many months, the whole thing was finished in a matter of minutes! This is one instance of his sharing his lot with others.¹

A boy of about eight or ten once found Sri Ramana sitting on a rock near the Virupaksha Cave on Arunachala Hill. He sobbed bitterly since he thought the sage's ascetic life was too hard for one so young and bright. The following conversation ensued:

From *Ramana Darsan*

¹ *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam* (1969 Edn.), p. 239.



ON THE ROCK ABOVE VIRUPAKSHA, 1916-17. *Left to right:* (fourth row) Perumalswami, Kandaswami, Sri Ramana Maharshi (*seated*); (third row) Alagammal (Bhagavan's Mother), Palaniswami, C.K. Subramania Sastri; (second row) Ayyaswamy, Narayana Reddiar, Eswaraswami, M. Sivaprakasam Pillai; (first row) seated at front, not identified.

From Self Realisation: Life & Teachings of Ramana Maharshi by B.V. Narasimha Swami, first edition, 1931.

Boy: Why are you here, all alone like this?

Ramana: I had some trouble at home and so have come away like this.

Boy: Then how about your food?

Ramana: I eat if anybody gives me anything to eat.

Boy: I have a good master. I shall take you to him ... he will give you three pies a day and gradually he will increase it to six pies, and so on.

Ramana: Yes, please do so.²

The sage's coming to Arunachala (from Madurai where he was studying) had a deep spiritual significance and was not a mere case of running away from home. Yet he spoke these words to the boy whose genuine concern and profound compassion he appreciated.

A little girl, a devotee's daughter, once asked Sri Ramana why he never left Tiruvannamalai to go and visit his devotees. Sri Ramana's reply was:

You wanted to see me, so you came here and as I am always here you were able to see me; but if I kept moving about you might not find me here. Many people come here and if I were absent they would have to go away disappointed. And even if I left here how do you know I should ever reach your house, when there are so many people in Tiruvannamalai and other towns on the way who would invite me to their houses....

I am kept in confinement. This my jail.³

Such a statement, simple enough to convince

² *Day by Day with Bhagavan* (1968 Edn.), pp. 13-4.

³ *Day by Day with Bhagavan* (1968 Edn.), pp. 256-7.

a child, carries practical wisdom too. Once when Sri Ramana was alone and was doing a little bit of a mason's job at the Virupaksha Cave where he was then staying, a visitor enquired, "Where is the Swami?" The sage coolly told him the Swami had gone out. The visitor repeated the visit two days later and again finding only the same old person was puzzled. Some time later a devotee told him that the Swami was none other than the person at the mason's job. When asked about it Sri Ramana remarked:

Do you want me to go about with a bell round my neck announcing "I am the Swami" or to have a label on my forehead that I am the Swami?"⁴

Such was his simplicity.

At one time Sri Ramana's clothes consisted of nothing more than a codpiece and a towel which was little better than a rag. A cowherd boy who was passing joked about the rag of a towel, saying that the Governor wanted it! Sri Ramana joined the fun and said in reply: "Tell him I won't give it to him!"⁵

The human side of a *jnani* is impressive and interesting. But a debated question is whether a *jnani* can continue to live with a body. Sri Ramana did continue to live in the body for four and fifty years after he attained *jnana*. When questioned, he clarified the matter thus:

There are various controversies or schools of thought as to whether a *jnani* can continue to live in his physical body after realisation. Some hold that one who dies cannot be a *jnani*, because his body must vanish into air, or some such thing. They put forward all sorts of funny notions. If a man must at once leave his body when he realises the Self, I wonder how any knowledge of the Self or the state of realisation can come down to other men. And that would mean that all those who gave given us the fruits of their Self-Realisation in books cannot be considered *janis* because they went on living after realisation. And if it is held that a man cannot be considered a *jnani* so long as he performs actions in the world

When Dry 'Jnana' Ridiculed Maudlin Bhakti

By J. Jayaraman

Too poor am I for '*jnana*' prattle
Ego's own eristic rattle

Elenchus coated Catch-2-2
The heady egg-and-chicken brew

Of seeker-sought solipsism
Of *jnana-bhakti* vis-a-vis m.

Avoid would you a missing mind?
Or void an absence you'd
ne'er find?

This *bhakti-jnana* juggernaut
Can only roll with *karta* caught!

To hug a-l-one ness 'yond the Two
And under-stand the 'me' in you

One needs one-pointed devotion
To Self, that's God,
that Love-Light-Ocean.

(and action is impossible without the mind), then not only the great sages who carried on various kinds of work after attaining *jnana* must be considered *ajnanis* but the gods also and Iswara Himself, since He continues looking after the world. The fact is that any amount of action can be performed, and performed quite well, by the *jnani* without his identifying himself with it in any way or ever imagining that he is the doer. Some power acts through his body and uses his body to get the work done.⁶

⁴ *Day by Day with Bhagavan* (1968 Edn.), pp. 142-3.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 143.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 238-9.

Completely Become One

By Zen Master Seung Sahn

When I was in the hospital, the doctors checked my heart. The first time they checked, there were 23-25 mistakes (premature ventricular contractions) in one minute, out of about eighty beats.

Many people have read about research by a Harvard professor who checked people with bad hearts, diabetes, etc. He checked people who did meditation and people who didn't. People who didn't do meditation were all right with medicine, but not all right without their medicine. But, people who tried concentration meditation got better more quickly, and were all right without their medicine. The Transcendental Meditation people advertised this: "Meditation can fix many sicknesses." So now, many doctors like meditation. My doctors said, "Soen Sa Nim, you are a Zen Master, so you try!" So, I said, "All right, I will try." I tried this fix-your-body meditation. In three days, my heart was making only five mistakes. Usually, it takes about one month to recover like this, so many doctors understood this meditation was helping my body; and they were very happy.

After one week, my heart was making only one or two mistakes, and my doctors said, "This is wonderful! Most people take two or three months to come down to only one or two mistakes each minute!" I said, "Thank you very much; you have helped me, so I can get better quickly. But this is only fix-your-body meditation. This is not correct meditation."

"Why isn't this correct meditation?" they asked.

"You can fix your body, your heart, your diabetes. In Korea, China and India, there are people who do yoga. They go to the mountains and do breath-in, breath-out meditation. They can live five hundred years and not get sick. Keeping their bodies for a long time is possible;

even flying in the sky is possible. Trying this style of body meditation, anything is possible. A body is like a car. Use the car a lot, and in three years, it is broken. Only keep the car in the garage, then keeping it for a long time is possible. But finally, after five hundred years, these yoga people die. Then what? Live a long time, then die; live a short time, then die — it is the same! Dying is the same."

The doctors understood. "What is correct meditation, then?"

I told them, "Meditation means always keeping one mind, not-moving mind." They thought meditation meant only concentration and keeping your body still. So I said, "Meditation means keeping one mind. You must understand — what is life? What is death? If you keep one mind, there is no life, no death. Then, if you die tomorrow, no problem; if you die in five minutes, no problem."

"What do you mean, no problem?" they asked.

"Maybe you do fix-your-heart meditation. Then, 'My heart is good; my body is good!' It is very easy to become attached to this meditation. But, when you get old, and your heart is not so good, then you try this meditation. Maybe it is still not so good. Then, 'Why doesn't my meditation work?' Then your body, your meditation become hindrances. If your meditation cannot help your body, then you don't believe in your meditation. Then what? So, this style of meditation is no good.

"Correct meditation means correctly understanding your situation moment to moment. What are you doing now? Only *do* it! Then, each action is complete; each action is enough. Then no thinking; so each moment, I can perceive everything just like this. Just like this is truth. Sick-time, only be sick. Driving-time, only

drive. Only go straight — then, any situation is no problem.”

The doctors liked this; they wanted to hear more about Zen. So, the doctors came to my room, and I talked to them for two hours. One doctor asked me, “I am very busy at the hospital, then going home to my family. How can I keep a clear mind?”

“Clear mind,” I told them, “means moment to moment, what are you doing *now*? When you are with your patients, only keep doctor’s mind hundred per cent. When you leave the hospital and you are driving home, keep driver’s mind hundred per cent. When you meet your wife, keep husband’s mind hundred per cent. This means, each moment, only go straight — don’t make ‘I’, ‘My’, ‘Me’. If you make ‘I’, ‘My’, ‘Me’, then your opinion and your situation appear. Then, you have a problem.

“If, when you are with your patients, you think, ‘Where is my wife? Is she spending a lot of money?’ — then, when this patient is talking to you, you only say, ‘Uhm, yeah, mmm-mmm.’ So the patient is thinking, ‘What does the doctor *think*?’ They don’t believe you. If you are talking to your wife, and she is telling you something important, and you are thinking about the hospital, this is just your opinion; this is just thinking; it is not your just-now situation. So, put it all down; only go straight.

“We say ‘jeon il,’ completely become one. When you are doing an operation, you and the knife completely become one. When you are driving in your car, you and the car become one. If you drive on a road with pebbles and you are not thinking, only driving, then you can feel these pebbles under your tires. Only become one means you and your action completely become one; then you and the universe only become one — completely no-thinking mind. Inside and outside become one. The name for this is ‘only go straight,’ or ‘put it all down,’ or ‘don’t make anything,’ or ‘keep clear mind’.”

“If you are only in the present, how can you

**To what indeed shall I liken
The world and the life of man?
Ah, the reflection of the moon
In the dewdrop
On the beak of the waterfowl.
— Dogen**

plan for the future or choose a direction? I have to plan for my patients, and for myself, my family,” one doctor said.

So I said, “What is the purpose of life? I asked many old people in the hospital this question, or ‘What did you get out of life?’ and many said, ‘Nothing.’ Maybe they have a good job, good family, good wife or husband, but these things cannot help them now. They want something they cannot have, and they understand this, so they say, ‘Nothing.’ This is understanding nothing. But understanding cannot help them, so they are suffering. Zen means *attaining* this nothing mind. The Buddha said, ‘If you keep clear mind moment to moment, then you will get happiness everywhere.’

“Zen is attaining this nothing mind, and then using this nothing mind. How can you use it? Zen means making this nothing mind into big-love mind. Nothing mind means no ‘I’, ‘My’, ‘Me’, no hindrance. So, this mind can change to Great-compassion mind, action-for-all-people mind. This is possible. Nothing mind does not appear, does not disappear. So, moment by moment, it is possible to keep your correct situation. Then, your mind is like a mirror — when you are with your patients, only become one. Then helping them is possible. When you are with your family, only become one; then understanding what is best for them is clear. Just like this. The blue mountain does not move. The white clouds float back and forth.”

Part of a Dharma speech delivered at the Cambridge Zen Centre in 1977.

BOOK REVIEWS

In the Charge of J. JAYARAMAN

HOMAGE TO THE PRESENCE OF RAMANA: Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai: by Muruganar. Tr. by Prof. K. Swaminathan. Pub: Sri Ramanasramam. pp. 176, Rs.

At the first glimpse of the rising sun the bird found its throat and proceeded to pour its heart out in 'profuse strains of unpremeditated art.' Thus in the ambience of Sri Bhagavan's radiance Muruganar's poetry burgeoned into 'a garland rare and rich of words'. In the soul of his poetry you find the ethereal music of the sky lark and the haunting melody of the cuckoo; in its body the flamboyance of the flamingo and the iridescence of the peacock.

There is little doubt that Muruganar was one of Bhagavan's chosen ones destined, or to be precise, ordained to expound the Maharshi's philosophy of existence and pay homage to the power and the glory of his Presence in exquisitely beautiful verses, turning cerebral and emotional by turns. With his very first encounter with Bhagavan all the chaos and aberrations that had snarled the pattern of his earlier life—which he refers to frankly and frequently in his verses—were churned up and dissolved in the blazing unity of absolute Beingness whose embodiment Bhagavan was.

The genius of Tamil lends itself to the expression of the most profound thoughts in terse and lucid terms. Generically and ontologically Muruganar's poetry belongs to the milieu which produced singer-saints Manickavasagar, Tirujnānasambandar and others of the mediaeval age and yet, as the Professor points out, 'not merely imitative or repetitive'.

The progress of Muruganar as a poet hinged on the extinction of his personality brought about by the devastating impact Bhagavan made on his ego. One has only to leaf through the volume and pick up verses at random to realise that each is a superbly crafted gem, coruscating with organic integrity and architectonic éclat. Functioning as an authentic oracle, a premier of the mysteries of Bhagavan and his grace, he casts his adored Venkata in a multiplicity of roles, those of father and mother, lover and beloved, beggar and betrayer. And having conjured up and enjoyed the broad spectrum of variegated Ramana experiences, he gathers them all and strings them together like so many sparkling gems in the unitary thread of his own integral realisation. He knows, and he declares in no uncertain terms in some of the verses, that he and Ramana, the servant and the sovereign, are in reality one. It is a grand game, an enthralling experience to participate in.

When Prof. Swaminathan undertook to translate Muruganar's verses into English, (with the inaugural issue of *The Mountain Path*), he had on hand a challenging task, a daunting venture. With his erudition and insight, his uncanny feel for words, his unerring ear for rhythm and resonance, he has captured the 'pure serene' of the

original in all its nuances, including the ethos-specifics of Tamil and even the minutiae of Muruganar's craftsmanship. The Professor's translation is not merely the transmission of the creative energy of the original but recreation in modern idiom and technique, riding a passionate and powerful syntax. The result is a work of unflawed brilliance, in impeccable English—a triumph of scholarship going cheek by jowl with dedication.

The happy combine of Muruganar, the poet and mystic non pareil, and Prof. Swaminathan, one of the most perceptive and literate among Bhagavan's devotees, has thus given us a book of all time, a source of perennial inspiration and aesthetic delight to all seekers of Truth. To go through Muruganar's verses, either in the original or in translation, to get involved in the depth and amplitude of a work of scriptural dimensions, is itself *sādhana* leading you unerringly towards the goal of human life, the irreversible and incorruptible beatitude of Liberation.

— V. Dhurandhar

THE SANSKRIT DRAMA: in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice: by Prof. A. Berriedale Keith. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N. Delhi 110007. pp. 372 + 32, Rs. 175.

The Sanskrit drama, published as far back in 1924 lays stress only on the great writers and dramatists who wrote before the end of the first millennium. Though the style is heavy and involved, representative of the time in which the book was first published it is marked by the great pains which the author has taken in evolving an authentic history of Sanskrit drama. Though looking askance at the native theory of the divine origin of drama, he agrees that atleast the germ of the drama lies in the Vedas.

Through the more active sources like the sacrificial and festival ceremonies and the tertiary sources like Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra*, the author very competently traces the evolution of the drama, right from the dramatic elements in Vedic literature (like the dialogues between the primeval twins — Yama and Yami), Vedic rituals and the post-Vedic literature like the epics.

His assessment, though at times tinged with occidental conditioning, is an objective one, like when he strongly turns down the theory of Dr. Ridgreaves who contends the Indian drama, like the Greek drama, is the outcome of the reverence paid to the spirits of the dead. He agrees more with Hillebrand and Konow in maintaining the view that, though religious rituals have a share in the development of drama, they also have had secular origins, evidenced by emergence of *Sutrādhāra* and *Sthāpaka*. While partly agreeing with Weber on the fact of Greek influence on the Sanskrit drama, he pays a tribute to the Indian genius for converting that which it borrows and assimilating it. But

the evidence leaves only a negative answer to the search for positive signs of influence.

The author also successfully debunks the theory that the drama first developed as a Prakrit drama before it was turned into Sanskrit on the evidence that the *Mahabhashya* knows the Sanskrit drama before any Prakrit drama is recorded.

The second part, on the development of the Sanskrit drama is a more interesting one. Starting from the discovery of fragments of palm-leaf manuscripts, containing parts of *Sāriputra Prakarana* of Ashwaghosha, Prof. Keith points out to the remarkable correspondence between this drama and the classical type in *Natya Sastra*. There are also evidences on the development of allegorical drama, much earlier to *Prabodha Chandrodāyam* and the hetaere. There is also a competent, if not complete, analysis of the language of the drama, like Sanskrit, Ardha-māgadhī, Prakrit etc.. The poet had the choice of Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhraṅca and Paisāchī. "The male attendants are to speak Apabhraṅca, the female, Māgadhī, while those within the harem itself are to use Prakrit and Sanskrit." Starting from a comparatively smaller area dedicated to Kālidāsa, the author makes a detailed analysis of the art and style, language and metres and the dramatic dexterity of renowned writers like Sudraka, Bhavabhūti, Harsha Vardhana and Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa. The literary beauty and the exquisite imagery of "Veni Samhāra" have been beautifully brought out. This is followed by short discussions on Rājasekara, Mūrāri, and other dramatists. Then follow the chapters on the decline of the Sanskrit drama. One is tempted to think that the reasons for the decline have been cursorily dealt with. Further, the chapters on the allegorical nātakas, with a fairly detailed analysis of the Jain work "Mahārāja-parājaya" and the allied Prahāsana works (Satire) have been dealt with in a very brief manner.

There is a very informative discussion on the characteristics and achievements of the Sanskrit drama, with quotations from masters like Goethe. It is difficult to accept some of the conclusions, like the peculiar and limited view that the drama was intensely connected with its Brahmanical character. There is also a very interesting reference to the unlikely aid to understand Indian drama — Vatsyāyana's *Kama Sutra*.

In the third part the author discusses the various theories of drama, the subject matter and the plot, characterisation, sentiments, dramatic styles, prologues and the types of drama.

The book published nearly seventy years ago, is still relevant and makes interesting reading. Though its coverage encompasses only a segment of Sanskrit drama, after having read the very informative book, one cannot but agree with Prof. Keith that "the Sanskrit drama can be legitimately regarded as the highest product of Indian poetry and as summing up in itself the final conception of literary art achieved by the very self-conscious creation of Indian Literature."

— S. Ram Mohan

HEVAJRA TANTRA (with the commentary *Yogaratanmāla*): Tr. by G.W. Farrow and I. Menon. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110 007. pp. 381, Rs. 350.

If at all there is a branch of knowledge which is much maligned and much misunderstood, it is the Tantra Shastra. Perhaps the Shastra itself has to be blamed. Its principles are not intelligible to the common man and its practices are heavily veiled in secrecy. Added to that, the Shastra frowns on the unbeliever with its strictures, confounds the critic with its misleading nomenclature, baffles the uninitiate with its codes and conundrums and laughs at the sceptic with its down-to-earth approach.

The word Tantra is derived from the Sanskrit root *tan* to spread, to elaborate in detail. Popularly the Tantric act represents a rite, a ritual and the Tantra has been claimed as a practical pragmatic science. In the path of Tantra, man is not branded as a sinner, his numerous failings are not looked down upon with contempt and scorn. If man is imperfect, it is because the Shakti in him has not come into full play. He need not reject any part of his being, need not be ashamed of himself. The very things that degrade a man are taken up for accomplishing the upward climb *Yaireva patanam nram siddhis tairiva codita*. The Tantra does not shun or reject manifested Nature and its difficulties. It confronts them, siezes and conquers.

The contents of the Buddhist Tantric texts are not exactly the same as the Indian ones. In the Indian tradition the supreme objective is to realise the ultimate Bliss represented by the union of Siva and Sakti or Vishnu and Lakshmi. In the Buddhist Tantra the supreme objective is to pass from existence to non-existence, to realise the Void, the supreme *sunya* and the consort of *sunya*, known as *nairātmyā* soullessness. It recognises Bliss as *samvara*, the hidden essence in all beings, not as the ultimate Truth of the Divine but as a concomitant experience on the realisation of the Void. The present work under review is one of the cardinal texts of the Vajrayāna tradition. It is influenced by the views in the Madhyamika works of Nagarjuna and the works of other Mahāyāna schools.

In fact Vajra is a word of antique origin found in the Veda. In the Veda, the Vajra is the weapon, the might and the power of Indra, the Supreme Lord of the triple universe of the physical, the vital and the mental. He is the Vajradhara, the wielder of the Vajra and with it he smashes Vritra, the coverer of Truth and knowledge. With it he breaks open the rocks of inert matter to release the hidden waters of the spirit. In the sky Vajra is the thunderbolt with which Indra hits at the clouds to give up to the earth their vivifying waters. Indra's Sakti is *vajra vairochani*, his Light and Might, one of the ten great cosmic powers mentioned in the Indian Tantra Shastra.

Following the Vedic tradition, the Buddhist religion has given the highest place to the concept of Vajra and has woven round the word a host of esoteric and occult significances. *Vajra* is the hard adamant, the sparkling diamond, the Jewel, *mani* the unbreakable — which always goes along with the soft tender fragrant Lotus *padma*, the

twin principles of matter and spirit, male and female, Siva and Sakti of the Indian tradition, the static and dynamic of Creation. Hence the great *Om Manipadme Hum*. Here, in the text, the meaning of the name of the deity is given thus: *hé* means supreme compassion and *vajra* the Void.

Though the Supreme is sunya, the Void there is a vibrant compassion turned towards the living beings in order to guide them from Existence to Non-existence, from the world of phenomenon and transitoriness to the absolute Nihil. The deity Hevajra is at the same time, *prajna* wisdom and *Upāya* the means, the hidden essence *samvara* in everything. The competent translator of the text in his well-written preface draws the pointed attention of the reader to the tantric system of language used in the text, which veils rather than reveals the true import. He demonstrates with the help of the commentary *Yogaratanamāla* how even in the opening innocuous sentence of the text, *évam maya srutam* "thus have I heard" pregnant utterances are implied. The Sanskrit letter *é* is the code for a triangle with apex downwards and the letter *vam* is the code for a triangle with apex upwards. Thus *évam* represents a configuration of two triangles superimposed, one with apex upwards and the other downwards, the famous *shatkona*, the confluence of Siva and Sakti, in the Indian tradition, here the *prajna* and *upāya*, the Hevajra himself. With the help of the commentary, the translator has succeeded in bringing out the hidden and esoteric import in many passages of the text which to a superficial reader appears to be vulgar and obscene.

The text is divided into two parts. The first part contains eleven chapters, the topics ranging from: the deity, the relevant Mantras, the Goddess Nairāmtya (soullessness) and her circle, to purification, consecration and other rites. The second part contains twelve chapters where the means, the *Upāya* is extensively dealt with. The Master finds out the dominant passion in each disciple, puts him in the care of an appropriate deity of the Vajra family to guide him to higher things through that passion itself and thus launches him in the *sādhana*. Thus generated *Utpanna* into a new birth he becomes accomplished *nishpanna* in course of time.

— S. Sankaranārāyanan

THE SACRED MARRIAGE OF A HINDU GODDESS: by William P. Harman. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110007. pp. 232, Rs. 120.

This book is quite a remarkable exercise in what is now regarded as 'cross-cultural understanding'. It owes its origins to Harman's experiences when he sojourned at Madurai in 1968-70. In Chaitra of that period there was the annual celebration of the Brahmotsava of the renowned temple of Goddess Minākshi at Madurai. Thousands gather at the place to watch the festival which lasts for ten days. The sheer zeal, earnestness and devotion, the utter feeling of oneness with the whole scene that the crowds feel, moved as it possibly could not fail to move, Mr. Harman. It was, however not easy to understand it. A friend who made a film of it helped and the result is this book. Need-

less to say its ultimate source is the classic *Tiru Vilayādal Purāna* of Paranjyoti Muni, of which there is a Sanskrit version in 'Kutti' Dikshitar's *Siva Lila Arnava*.

The six chapters of the book cover (a) the Sacred marriage, (b) Siva's Lila (c) the Goddess's wedding with Lord Siva (d) the primacy of the Goddess in the Madura Utsava (e) the aftermath (f) the bonds that marriage seals. There are appendices on Sanskrit and Tamil terms, a translation of the chapter on the wedding in *Tiru Vilayādal Purāna* and chapter titles from the Purāna.

Viewing the annual event from various angles, as the chapter headings show, Harman shows that the sacred wedding bears an unusually intimate significance for the Hindu devotee. The super humans play their part and set a glorious example to the mere humans. The latter find a certain ineffable ecstasy in watching the event, a sense of profound identification and fulfilment, an exaltation altogether unique and gratifying. Harman goes as deep as any foreigner can and one has the feeling that his earnestness has been most rewarding. The Tamil transliteration of Sanskrit words is absolutely atrocious.

— Prof. S. Rāmaswāmy

MYTHS OF COMPOSITE CULTURE AND EQUALITY OF RELIGIONS: by Harsh Narain, Pub: Voice of India, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002. pp. 83, Rs. 25.

The story of the incursion of Islam into India, says Will Durant, is one of the bloodiest episodes in world history. And the story of Muslim rule in India? Alas! not less bloody, by any means. There are, of course, a school of Indian historians of the Nehru era who look on the British portraits, by British historians of the period, be they Sir Richard Burn, Sir Wolseley Haig or Vincent Smith or the historians contributing to the Cambridge History of India (this last is now under Anglo-American revision) as deliberately concerned to present the Muslim period in Indian history as a period of political oppression, religious intolerance and communal violence. The motive these people allege, is to suggest that the British saved non-Muslim India from oppressive persecution and worse. The writer of the pamphlet under review, well read and scholarly, seeks to suggest that this new approach to Indian history is also motivated. Bias in history, Trevelyan said, makes history readable. But it also makes history unreliable! Anyhow the neo-secularist Indian students writing a new kind of history exhibit a superficiality, a truly Marxist tendency to sweeping generalization that makes their history a contribution to be approached with a barrel, not just a grain of salt.

The fact of the matter is, as Harsh Narain seeks to show in this pamphlet, that Islam, like most semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity) is exclusivistic. Hinduism is inclusivistic, keeps an open door, welcoming into its fold even animists. The Rig Vedic text, often cited as proof that Hinduism preached universal toleration *ekam sat, viprah bahudha vadanti*, is doubtless a statement of valid truth. But there have been, alas! even till recently, violent mutual conflicts between Hindus and non Hindus and most distressingly, within the Hindu fold itself.

The story of a composite culture, formed out of friendly exercises in inter-religious understanding and harmony is alas! just a story, a myth, put forward, not for religious purposes but, distressingly, for political ones!

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, practised Islamic and Christian sadhanas successfully. Bhagavan Ramana had Muslim and Christian disciples who did not cease to be Muslims or Christians in their ardent devotion to the message and personality of Sri Ramana. And most recently, the Sage of Kanchi, Sri Chandrasekhara Saraswati, lived in letter and spirit, in complete harmony with the Gitacharya's affirmation "All paths lead only to Me".

Religious quest is a pilgrimage of faith. To politicize it is to vulgarize it.

— Prof. S. Ramaswami

TOLERANCE IN INDIAN CULTURE: edited by R. Balasubramanian, Pub: Indian Council of Philosophic Research, D.D. Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi 110002. pp. x + 138, Rs 60.

This book consists of nine papers presented and discussed in a National Seminar on 'The Concept and Role of Tolerance in Indian Culture' held at the Radhakrishnan Institute of the University of Madras. Scholars are drawn from different religious traditions and cultural ethos and analyse and examine six important issues arising from the theme of the Seminar. Some of the factual and normative claims and assertions of these scholars, which are provocative and disputable, deserve careful reading and consideration.

Is there justification for the issue for the assumption that there is tolerance in Indian culture? Many scholars have answered this question in the affirmative. For example, Amaldoss, Syed Ali, Ram Singh and Jamal Khwaja hold the view that there was and is tolerance in Indian Culture, though they have difference of opinion with regard to the nature and aspects of tolerance pursued and practised in India.

The second important issue is about the connotation of the term 'tolerance'. Though all of us use this word, each one does so in a different context. Subramaniam says the term tolerance "stands for an attitude of mind and indicates a virtue bordering on graceful acceptance of the different and even hostile; but in ordinary usage it also slightly smacks of supercilious condescension." Ram Singh defines tolerance "as the ability of a culture to absorb alien thought patterns without adversely affecting its own ethos". Khwaja says that it is necessary to make a contextual as well as phenomenological analysis of the term 'tolerance' to understand it in the particular context where it is used.

An important issue is the relation between culture and philosophy. By bringing out the connection between the two, Kalidas Bhattacharya says that philosophy of a people, "is only their culture formulated and justified in intellectual language". This implies that one can derive the idea of tolerance from the conception of philosophy and culture.

The fourth issue relates to the culture of peace. Ramakant Sinari holds that the culture of peace, which is at the root of Indian tradition has two distinguishable but related aspects, "a transcendental discipline emphasising the attainment by the self of its highest state of composure and tranquility" and "a Dharma or ethics that advises every one to abstain from doing harm to others." He maintains, it is the culture of peace that contributes to the coexistence of diverse points of view, and the tolerance of the value systems of others. N.S. Dravid tries to show the philosophical basis of tolerance, surveys both orthodox and heterodox systems in India and comes to the conclusion that Advaita-Vedanta is philosophy par-excellence which alone can inculcate the sterling quality of tolerance among one's fellow-human beings. Even G.C. Nayak voices the same opinion lending support to Advaita concluding that "transcendental secularism" derived from "transcendental monism" ... "provides a firm basis for catholicity of outlook".

The fifth issue relates to the theory-practice problem. Ram Singh and Jamal Khwaja discuss this in detail. Ram Singh concludes that "the degree of tolerance in every culture is balanced between ideology and social structure", and that the see-saw battle between the two is an existential stage in every culture. Khwaja concludes that "if tolerance remains incomplete without equality of status, the Hindu concept of tolerance has only one leg to stand upon".

On the problem of the one God and many religions Amaldoss refers to many models such as: the naming model, the prism model, the river-sea model, the language model and the community model, that are available for explaining religious pluralism, showing his preference for the last model. On the issue of Hindu-Muslim synthesis in the culture tradition of India, Syed Ali argues that it is the spirit of tolerance that has contributed to the evolution of Indian culture which is not only complex but also composite in its character. He brings out the Hindu-Muslim synthesis by citing a number of examples drawn from the customs and practices followed by them.

There is much more than a philosophical, social or religious issue of the term 'tolerance'. Rightly understood, the purpose of the seminar on 'tolerance' is to teach us how to live in this world.

— Prof. K.S. Ramakrishna Rao.

THE MYTH OF THE ARYAN INVASION OF INDIA: by David Frawley. pp 58, Rs. 25.

ARYAN INVASION OF INDIA: The Myth and the Truth: by N.S. Rajaram. pp. 63, Rs. 20. Both published by Voice of India, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110001.

As the titles indicate, both these interesting publications deal with exploding what was until recently considered established historical fact: that tribes of barbarian nomads from Central Asia migrated to India in approximately 1500 B.C., conquered the indigenous urban civilization existing mainly along the Indus river, and replaced its culture with its own. Frawley and Rajaram in unison totally disagree, presenting a convincing argument that this event never

happened! There never was an invasion! Rājāram calls it "Frawley's paradox: history without literature and literature without history". Frawley deals with the subject in the small booklet which contain much material from his 1991 book "Gods, Sages and Kings", whereas the Rājāram booklet is a compilation of two talks delivered in India in 1993. Both scholars belong to what is becoming known as the "Indo-American" school of Vedic studies, which is distinguished by "a totally new approach to the study of ancient chronology". Frawley is widely recognized as an expert western scholar in Vedic studies, and Rājāram brings a broad scientific background in mathematics, computers and linguistics.

The implication of their thesis is staggering. The entire history of India, as commonly written even now-a-days, has to be changed radically to match the facts, as given by new findings and ever more sophisticated methodology of scrutinizing them. A new model of world history is presented. Greece, Babylonia and Egypt are used as examples to show the Indian influence on their cultures, not vice versa. It now appears that after the last Ice-Age in India, a new village sprouted which grew into what is known as Harappan civilization, the largest in the world at the time. This flourished, and ended not because of invasion, but because of natural ecological disaster — its supporting river, the Saraswati dried up! Both writers point out how there is no evidence to validate any invasion theory, but how in the 19th century it proved to be convenient for political and social reasons. Rājāram's account of how the myth was encouraged is a little more detailed. Indologist Max Mueller's errant ways are revealed.

Both use Rig Vedic astronomical and mathematical data to prove why Vedic civilization in India must be dated much earlier than previously thought, but different examples are cited. Rājāram gives us a handy map of the Harappan sites excavated in north-western India. Frawley mentions they extend as far as the Godavari river in S. India. Rājāram delightfully adds a colour-plate of what is known as "Vasishtha's Head", positively dated by the best laboratories. These booklets are easy and enjoyable reading for anyone exploring their own origins. However, they are not just connected with the past. Special emphasis is placed on the fact that the word "Aryan" originally never had anything to do with race — a very important point with the rise of Neo-Nazism in the world today. The perceptive reader should also note how fragile civilizations can be if Nature is not taken into account!

— Ian Martin

VEDIC THOUGHT AND WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY: by Dr. Shivram Karikal. Arathi Publications, Anugraha, Hat Hill, Microwave Station Road, Mangalore-560001. pp. xiii+288, Rs. 150.

The subject of Eastern and Western approaches to the problems of human existence had for long engaged the exclusive attention of many great scholars. *Vedic Thought and Western Psychology* is a welcome new arrival, definitely one of the most original and heart-searching works to come from an eastern mind. Here Dr. Shivram

Karikal, a specialist in Psychiatry, is handling instead of pictures of comparison a presentation of the philosophy of Yoga in striking contrast to Western Psychology.

The aim of this book is not just to describe the impasse created by Western Psychology in elucidating the nature of consciousness, but to show how the wisdom of Vedas can lead us further. It brings us to realise that the fundamental issues of inequality, diversity and plurality in the realm of manifest reality are not satisfactorily explained by the scientific models of causality. Viewed in the light of Yoga-Vedanta they lack credibility. The seeker who pines for self-growth through them may take up improper search and come to ruin. This is reinforced over and over again by the author at certain points when he comes down heavily on Western Schools of Psychology. The criticism directed against these armchair thinkers and their adoration of the unconscious is distinct in Chapter 7: "Freud's message is unnerving whereas Patanjali's life inspiring. Freud as a psychotherapist stirs the patient's psyche in order to bring the hidden complexes to the surface in a setting of transference reaction, but he leaves his patient there at cross-roads. Patanjali's Yoga system shows the path further from this point in the inward journey via *viveka* (discrimination), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (union with oneself). All the complexes are transcended there forever."

Dr. Shivram's emphasis is on the Western scientists' and psychologists' need to adopt a life of self-restraint and pursue the path of Yoga in order to experience the higher truth of Upanishads for themselves. His interpretation of these teachings opens up new vistas of life-enriching thoughts on the riddles that prevented man from realising his own nature. According to Vedas, self-existence is eternal in its subject-subject mode but intermittent and spasmodic in the peripheral subject-object mode. "All peripheral 'selves' are illusory shadows on one single central Self which exists for ever. Self-choice, self-will and self-responsibility are the very attributes of self-existence, although in the peripheral subject-object mode of existence, the subject experiences the object as its cause of misery or happiness. This lasts until the realisation of the identity of subject and object is achieved through a process of self-expansion." The book includes a mass of reference by way of quotations and explanations in each chapter cited by the author from nearly a hundred sources. A distinguishing feature is the precise rendering of Sanskrit words with care into English to explain mental events such as cognition and memory. Dr. Shivram's fluent style with an amazing sincerity makes the book unusually readable and puts the seeker on his track with perfect ease.

— R. Ramasami

HEART OF COMPASSION/CALL OF COMPASSION/COMPASSION THE CROWN OF LIFE/COMPASSION IN ACTION: all four edited by Sw. Sahajananda. Pub: Divine Life Society of South Africa, PO Box 19069 Dormerton, Durban, S.A. 243 pages each. Price not stated.

Animals, birds, insects, plants and soil, water, air and

fire are the organs of invisible Nature. We, endowed with the role of participant and witness, have therefore the responsibility to protect and preserve our environment. But where does one's environment begin and end? Ecology is not so much a question of competition as it is one of a harmonious dynamic balance within Nature's forms. This interplay is mostly enacted by 'blind instinct' we are told. Man too, driven by instinct, thinks. He can sense the world and sense this act too. He can become aware of a succession of thought. He can become aware that he is awareness. His unique sense of bondage vouchsafes for him a unique experience of freedom. His unique sense of individuality can bestow on him a unique experience of Cosmic oneness. He can be a demon of greed or a god in deed. Even from a very selfish point of view it pays Man to be selfless!

To protect animals and plead for their rights goes hand in hand with our protection of Nature and our own survival. This is the principal aim of four volumes under review. The first of these was however published several years ago under a different title by the Sadhu Vaswani Mission. The volumes are a homage to the memory of the Sadhu and Gurudev Sivananda.

There are many reprints from *Animal Citizen* magazine and several contributions from Eastern and Western authors. There are also anecdotes concerning Sri Ramana and animals. These are fascinating accounts of animals and birds, their habitats and life-style, how animal mothers take care of their babies, how the four-legged doctors treat themselves, animal quiz—all these are sure to enthral young readers. There is a thrilling account captured on video camera in the South African Kruger Park. It is probably the only recorded account of a flesh-eater being forced to release its victim by the interference of a third species which is not itself carnivorous. This tale of the 'Good Samaritan Hippopotamus' interfering with a crocodile's capture of a deer is sure to awe even the rabid votary of a 'blind' Nature, to whom Man's superior intellect, altruistic emotions and 'awareness' are all mere molecular biochemistry. Unpretentious humility is needed to intuit and transcend Seer-Seen dichotomy, the prime material of nature. Till then the Seer survives by 'evolving' various theories regarding a spatio-temporal evolution of the Seen; theories chaotic, heuristic, stochastic, teleologic, morphogenetic, holographic, whatever.

The volumes are adorned with exquisite colour plates—nearly half the pages to be precise—of plants, flowers, animals, insects and birds. It is a bit disappointing to find that the photographs are unrelated to the articles in which they appear. It is also a matter of great frustration that the photos are without legend or identification which would have been of immense help for 'eager beavers'. A name attached to a form is a great help in remembering, communicating with others and in seeking reference from other sources. We do hope this additional labour would be undertaken in subsequent editions.

All in all, these volumes in memory of Sadhu Vaswani and Swami Sivananda are a treasure to be dipped into time and again, a *namaskara* to Nature, and a celebration

of her magnanimity and magnificence, in colour and chronicle.

— J. Jayaraman

THE SUPREME YOGA: A NEW TRANSLATION OF YOGA VASISHTHA (in 2 vols.): by Sw. Venkatesananda. Pub: The Divine Life Society, U.P. 249192, India. pp. 761, Rs. 60 each.

This two volume set, or if printed in the USA single volume edition, 753-page translation of the complete Yoga Vasistha is a magnificent translation and condensation of the original 32,000 verses. The Yoga Vasistha is a masterpiece and encompasses about every aspect of nondual spiritual practice and Self-Realization. This book is not just for those practising in India, nor is it a historical record of how the spiritually gifted ones practised a long time ago, but this is a book that transcends time and space. It is for the modern man, spiritual seeker and for the yogi or sannyasin. Its breadth is vast and it covers many spiritual topics and covers each topic from numerous points of view. It is especially important for those on the path of self-inquiry and anyone who practises the Maharshi's teaching.

A verse by verse translation by Mitra around the year 1890 consists of approximately 5,000 pages and a recent translation by Bulusu Venkateswarulu consists of 1,500 pages. To condense a text of 32,000 verses is no small task, and Swami Venkatesananda succeeds admirably in retaining the original power and feeling of the stories and conveys the spiritual truth in a precise manner. For those who would like a taste of the original, 732 transliterated verses are also given interspersed in the 2 volumes.

Many of the stories and dialogues are well translated. The Great Forest story for example runs thus: "There was a great forest, so large that millions of square miles were like the space within an atom in it. In it there was just one person who had a thousand arms and limbs. He was for ever restless. He had a mace in his hand with which he beat himself and, afraid of the beating, he ran away in panic. He fell into a blind well. He came out of it, again beat himself, again ran away in panic Though there was no other being to fear, he wept and cried aloud in fear. He kept running as before, beating himself as before."

Vasistha explains that the story shows how life in samsara is continuous suffering caused only by our own mind. It runs here and there looking for real peace but finding only suffering caused by our tendencies and *vasanas*.

In addition to the stories, the book contains spiritual instruction in the form of dialogue and meditations. One such example is Prahlada's meditation: "This self is the emptiness in space. It is the motion in all things moving. It is the light in all things luminous. In all liquids it is taste. It is solidity in earth. It is heat in fire. It is coolness in the moon. It is the very existence of the worlds. Even as all these characteristic qualities exist in the corresponding substances, even so it exists as Lord in the body. Just as existence exists everywhere and just as time exists at all

times, this self exists in all bodies, with all the physical and psychological faculties."

There are several parts of the translation that fail to convey the spiritual message clearly which may be due in part to the complexity of the material. When paring down from the original Sanskrit the translator had to leave out many of the clarifying arguments and different angles of vision. An example of this is found in the episode of Chudala and Sikhidvaja. In the story, the king Sikhidvaja, renounces his kingdom in order to seek Realization. Chudala, the wife of Sikhidvaja, transforms herself into a young Brahmin boy and instructs him on renunciation and later, on the nonexistence of the ego. All this, which follows closely the reasoning in the Maharshi's *WHO AM I?*, does not come across very well in the present edition. Too much has been pruned away from the original.

Venkatesananda's high regard for Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi is exhibited in the edition published in two volumes in 1976 by Chiltern Yoga Trust in South Africa. The beginning of the second volume contains a quotation from the Maharshi about *chidābhāsa* and world illusion and how to eliminate this through self inquiry. Unfortunately this has been removed in the later editions.

This book is highly recommended for it has everything a serious spiritual aspirant needs on the path of liberation.

— Eric Ruetz

CAN GOD IMPROVE MY BALANCE SHEET? - *Invoking the Inner Potential*: by Dwarkanath Reddy. Pub: Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., 61-A, Ormes Road, Kilpauk, Madras-600 010. pp. 137, Rs. 90.

The title and blurb may make one dub this book as yet another in the "How To ..." series that periodically pops up in the book world, sermonizing the naive and the gullible on worldly matters with other-worldly metaphors. This one is far, far from it. In this remarkable book, Dwarkanath Reddy unfolds in rhythmic lucidity a practical, spiritual guide to material pursuits. The racy narration with punches of humour is sure to sustain the interest of readers from all walks of life. The puritans among secular-minded can also rest assured that 'God' present in the title never intrudes in the narration, except to reveal Himself as it were in a single para in the last chapter, where the author humbly takes the readers' permission to put forward his definition of God.

The thrust of the book reminds one of a puranic tale about a pious king of Benaras who proclaimed that he would part with half of his kingdom, and also give his daughter in marriage, to the best of the able-bodied devotees of Siva found absorbed in steadfast penance continuously for a year on the banks of the Ganges. A notorious dacoit decided to pose as a devout yogi, sit quietly at the riverside for a year and win the king's gifts. As months rolled by, his discipline, though feigned, slowly but surely engulfed the dacoit in the blessedness of peace. At the year-end, the king's choice fell on this 'dacoit-yogi'; to whom he prayed for accepting his wealth and his

daughter in marriage. The yogi opened his eyes, smiled and refused gracefully, and then fell back into his absorption in Self.

But, unlike the story, the guidelines in this book would enable dacoit yogis to get away with both the inner peace and the material wealth and happiness. For, the author's practical purpose, as he confesses in the chapter in 'Meditation', is not "pursuit of the goal of total freedom from desire" and "to close the mind too", but, "to open the mind, to enable the mind to function at its highest potential. Just the same, it helps us also to close the eyes; and to stay still awhile...".

The chapters are replete with regaling pieces of tested advice, like closing the eye to 'eye' the real 'I'. "Man has no problem, man himself is the problem" (p. 67). "For shame, there is never a heart-attack on man, there is only a *man-attack* on the heart!" (p. 74). "...our sound sleep is not the *silent* sleep that it is meant to be, but sleep filled with the sound of chattering thoughts that refuse to be stilled!" (p. 100).

All this and much more are cogently and coherently presented in arguments that deserve careful thought and practice for material success. And remember, they are told by a successful industrialist as Sri Reddy is, whose nationally-known Nutrine Confectionary Company has a group turnover of Rs. 1500 million. An M.S. in Chemical Engineering from Louisiana (USA), Sri Reddy is a blend of rational thinking with a deep understanding of philosophy. No wonder he has an abiding involvement in the methods of Maharshi Ramana, though he has carefully avoided dragging in the Maharshi in elaborating his secret of success for anyone to follow.

Can God Improve My Balance Sheet? is unabashedly a handy manual for successful living, invoking the inner potential the easy way.

— La. Su. Rengarajan

GEETARNAVA RATNAMALA : Commentary and Compilation of Srimad Bhagavad Gita — Sanskrit and Romanised text with English translation by V. Srinivasan. Pub: Shree Geeta Ashram, Delhi Cantt, India. pp. 649+xi.

This is a special edition of the Gita brought out with financial support from the International Federation of the Gita Ashrams. The translation is accompanied by extracts from a large number of commentaries, traditional and modern. Among the traditional ones prominence is given to that of Sankara and there are lengthy extracts from those of Sankarananda, Nilakantha, Sridhara, Madhusudana Saraswati etc. Modern authors whose commentaries are excerpted are: Sri Aurobindo, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahesh Yogi etc.

The Bhagavad Gita represents a masterly summation of the religious thought of India of the ages. It has a unique status, as a prime text of Hinduism and a general one as well, embodying the basic perceptions of other religions of the world.

Sankara's commentary is the earliest among the works available to us at present. He formulates a logical approach especially taking into account the antecedent to the whole episode of the Gita. Arjuna's mood of despondency on the eve of the fratricidal war between the Pandavas and Kauravas at Kurukshetra is composed of the elements of grief and delusion. These are but the root causes of *samsāra* for man in general. And Sri Krishna instructs him at the highest level, imparting Self Knowledge — as the only antidote to his malady. Even at the start of the discourse Sri Krishna speaks of the immortality of the soul. He denounces the notion of a mortal self and the idea of grieving over the death of anyone. The Self is never born, it can never die. This concept of Eternal Being, identical with one's awakened state, is projected by Sankara as the central message of the Gita.

The Gita has attracted a large number of other commentaries or expository works. These works reflecting various doctrinal positions may be said to differ essentially on the degree of identity the individual commentaries are prepared to concede between the individual and universal self. However it should be remembered that the purpose of the Gita is not the solution of metaphysical or cosmological problems. It is more concerned with pointing the way to freedom from suffering, from *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and death. It does this by delineating the different paths available for God Realisation. Of inestimable value is the instruction in the Gita as to the proper correlation a seeker should maintain in regard to the inward religious life and the outward one concerning the work-a-day world. The compiler has, by painstaking efforts, succeeded in placing before the reader valuable material from various sources. Perhaps inevitably, the selection could be only on random basis and it has not been possible to project the views of individual commentators at greater length. However, particularly in the case of Rāmānuja and Madhwa, it would have been appreciable if some more space had been allotted and an attempt made to present more prominently *visishtādvaitic* and *dvaitic* interpretations, at least on crucial verses of the Gita.

— Ramāmani

CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE ABSOLUTE: ed. by Jean Dunn. Pub: Acorn Press, P.O. Box 3279, NC27715 - 3279, USA. pp. 118, Price not stated.

This last collection of talks with Sri Nisargadatta Maharāj is the most accessible of the series diligently edited by Jean Dunn who was closely associated with Maharāj in his last years. There is a marvellous directness to Maharāj's communication in these final days before his death from throat cancer and that is due mainly to the remarkable absence of self-pity or concern as his body struggled with the gnawing pain that was killing his earthly existence. Here is a being who not only taught non-identification with the body, in particular, but also lived it in the spirit of unencumbered freedom from any limitations form imposes.

Unlike the two previous books of talks this one is

generally clear of the metaphysical backdrop which Maharāj expounded, and as such, it has a vivid immediacy as he punches home the point time and again with potent urgency. For those who came within the orbit of Maharāj, Jean Dunn's book has an accessibility which puts you in touch with the spirit of his teachings. There is even an occasional glimpse, while reading, of his small loft, his altar, the photographs on the walls and the strong smell of incense.

It is a book which inspires more than it explains. The teachings are shorn to the bone. You can hear the crunch. Jean Dunn is to be congratulated on her dedication and adherence to the teachings of Maharāj. He chose her to carry through this task of editing and publishing his talks. She has fulfilled his insight and trust in her admirably.

— 'A.S. Rao'

THE NATURAL MAN: by Larry Morris. Pub: Akshaya Publications, 201 Gandhi Bazaar, Bangalore 560004. pp. 200, US\$ 12.

Larry Morris has given us a delightful collection of so called poems (epiphanies would be a better description), about his relationship with that scourge of fossilized traditions of God-fearing seekers, viz. U.G. [U.G. Krishnamurti] himself, iconoclast extraordinaire and un-abashed scoundrel, in short, a 'useless guy'.

U.G. has the cunning knack which relieves you of your illusions with his implacable eye and not quite reputable behaviour. He does not respond to people's expectations of how he should respond. He is unique.

I come away from Larry's jottings with a chuckle and a glow. What he communicates so simply and with such insight is truer than any number of massive, turgid tomes. He is light, and dare one say, enlightening.

Try these:

Driving Under the Influence

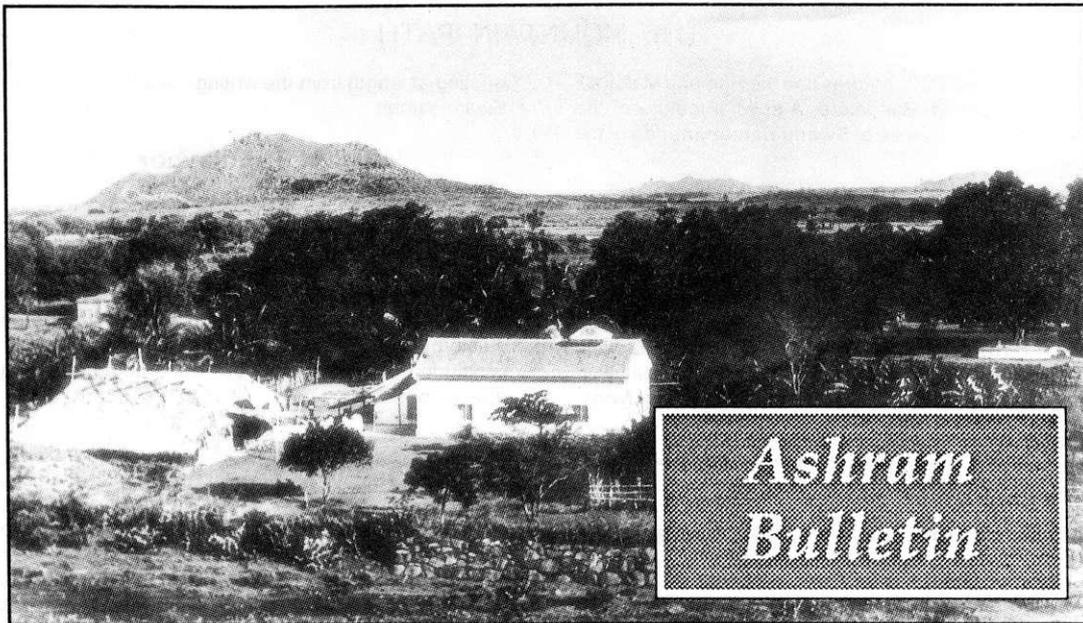
Driving / Mr UG / Foot to trembling pedal / brake brake
brake / hope I don't / blow it / doing 20 / in / a / 50 zone /
oops almost hit / that one / hope I make it / going soooooo /
slow... / with / that / eerie / presence / next to me / ET /
the / man / from / the / moon. / My / shy / heart / racing /
faster / than / the / car / ah, / U.G.

Nothing to do. Nowhere to go

"Nothing / is / happening - / No / one / to / be / just /
hanging / out / in / the / void / with / UG / Every / thought /
sets / a / goal / we / automatically / cancel / "Why /
bother" / yet / still / all / this / energy / peace / freedom. /
Nobody / cares / who / we / are / here. / What / a /
release / from / ourselves / our / needing / to / be / Some-
body - / yet / not / Nobody / either - / Just / here / orbiting /
around / a / Quantum / Leap.

Your appetite is whetted?

— 'A. S. Rao'



Ashram Bulletin

Kumbhabhishekam at Ashram

As reported in the last issue of 'The Mountain Path' renovation work on the towers over the shrines of Sri Bhagavan and Mother is proceeding well. The images in lime-mortar are being renovated according to traditional methods. The *vimanam* over the shrine of Sri Bhagavan is being enlarged — in the sense that its height is being increased — to suit aesthetic requirements. The Nataraja idol at the Shrine of the Mother will be shifted and relocated near the *navagraha murtis*, in order to conform to *agamic* requirements. The concrete pillars on the outer perimeter are being redone in ornamental fashion, so that the entrance to both the shrines will acquire a new, artistic look.

The *Kumbhabhishekam* with prescribed rituals will be performed in the first week of July '95. Commencing on July 3, the function will conclude with *samprokshanam* on July 7th.

Celebrations of 115th Jayanthi of Sri Ramana Maharshi

At Ashram (20-12-94)

It was an elaborate function at the Ashram in the usual manner in the presence of a large gathering of devotees. The Ramana Auditorium, decorated with flowers on a massive scale, wore a festive look.

The Ramananjali group, Bangalore gave a concert, the previous evening. The celebrations on Jayanti day commenced at five in the morning at the shrine with group singing of Tamil hymns on Sri Bhagavan.

As per normal daily routine the first puja to Sri Bhagavan (offering of milk) was done at seven, which was followed by breakfast. Chanting of *Maha Narayana Upanishad* commenced at eight. After special *abhishekam* the *Ramaneswara Mahalingam* was nicely decorated with a variety of choice garlands, and *puja* was performed. *Aarthi*, the finale of the *puja* came off at eleven. This was followed

by feasting of devotees and visitors, as usual. The poor were fed on a large scale.

At three in the afternoon there was a concert by 'Amritavarshani' group led by Smt. Sakkubai Srinivasan of Bangalore.

The function concluded with screening of the film on Sri Bhagavan after dinner.

At Madras

Sri Ramana Study Circle, West Tambaram, celebrated the Jayanti on 18-12-1994.

Sri Ramana Satchidananda Samajam, Choolaimedu organised the celebrations for four days between 19-12-94 to 22-12-94.

Justice Sri D. Raju presided over the function held at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore, on February 5. This was a function organised jointly by Ramana Kendra, Madras,

Sri Ramana Vidya Trust, Madras and the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore. A special feature of the function was the presence of **Swami Ramananda** of the Ashram.

At Delhi

Jayanti was celebrated at Ramana Kendra, on 20-12-94. The morning programme consisted of *puja* and *Veda Parayana*. Justice **Sri S. Ranganathan** presided over the public function in the evening and released *Upadesa Vilakkam 1* (The seventh volume of Sri Muruganar's *Ramana Jnana Bodham*). In his presidential address he dealt with several aspects of Sri Bhagavan's life and teachings,

quoting at length from the writings of Muruganar and Prof. Swaminathan.

At Thanjavoor

Jayanthi was celebrated at Janaki Nilayam, Ganapathy Nagar on 20-12-1994. *Puja* commenced in the early hours of the morning and went on till eleven. The evening programme consisted of speeches by young students on the life of Sri Bhagavan, as well as rendering of devotional music by **Miss B. Priya** and **Miss S. Uma**. The function concluded with recitation of *Aksharamanamalai* by all devotees.

Visit by Blind Children from Bangalore

A group of about fifty students and supervisors from Sri Ramana Maharshi Academy for the Blind, Bangalore visited the Ashram on November 20, 1994. Their singing of devotional songs at the shrine of Sri Bhagavan was highly impressive.

Sri Vidya Havan at the Ashram

This is an annual function which forms part of the worship of the *Sri Chakra Meru* in the Mother's Shrine at the Ashram. Conducted on the first Friday of the Tamil month of *Panguni*, the rituals are very elaborate and take about ten hours to complete. The essential rituals are: *navavarana puja*, *Lalita Sahasranama homa*, *Lalita Trisati homa*, *suvasini puja*, *kanya puja* etc. This was performed on March 17 this year.

Ashram President **Sri V.S. Ramanan** and **Smt. Susila Ramanan** took a leading part in the rituals, as required. *Purnahuti*, the finale is always a thrilling moment. This came off at about four in the evening and was witnessed by a good number of devotees (local as well as those from other places).

Forty-fifth Aradhana of Sri Bhagavan at Ashram (27-4-1995)

The Forty-fifth anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated at the Ashram in the usual, elaborate manner on 27-4-1995, in the presence of a large gathering of devotees.

The programmes on Aradhana Day are, in general, identical with those on Jayanti Day except that there is a difference in the choice of Tamil hymns for the group singing early in the morning.

There were two special features this time, however. One was the rendering of *Ramana Music* in classical Carnatic style by **Srimathi Ambika Kameswaran** on the

evening of the 26th. The other was a *nagaswaram* recital by **S.G.N. Pichaiappa** and **S.G.N. Ganesan** — on the morning of the 27th. Devotees and visitors were feasted, as usual, after the puja. The poor were also fed on a large scale.

Mahapuja at Ashram (22-5-95)

By his personal and powerful touch during the last moments of his mother, Sri Bhagavan conferred on her the Supreme State of Liberation. Mahapuja commemorates this great event, which took place on 19 May 1922. According to the Hindu Calendar this comes off on *Vaisakha Bahula Navami*.

As per the usual practice on such occasions, special *abishekam* and *puja* to Sri Matrubhuteswara (preceded by *mahanyasam*) were performed on May 22. The entire shrine was decorated with flowers. All the *murtis* were decorated with special garlands.

Smt. Sulochana Natarajan gave a concert in the evening, after dinner.

Essay/Quiz competition on Life and Teachings of Sri Bhagavan

As essay and quiz competition for students at higher secondary and high school levels on the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan was organised jointly by the Ashram and Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore, in December '94.

There was enthusiastic participation by the students—the number of participants was well over 1,500.

At a colourful function at the Ashram on the evening of February 7th, prizes to the winners (as well as certificates) were presented by **Swami Sri Ramananda**. **Sri V.S. Ramanan**, the Ashram President, presided over the

function. Sri A.R. Natarajan delivered a special address on the occasion.

The efforts of Sri R. Natarajan, Retired Headmaster, who visited the schools, conducted classes and otherwise contributed in all ways to the success of the project, deserve special mention.

Fax at Ashram

A fax machine gifted to the Ashram by the Gangaji Foundation, U.S.A. is now operational. Our fax number is : 91-4175-22491.

Obituary

N. Balarama Reddy (1908-1995)

Sri Nidimusali Balarama Reddy, a staunch, well-known devotee and permanent resident of the Ashram, was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on May 11.

Hailing from an aristocratic family of Vutukur village (situated on the banks of the North Pennar River), Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh, Sri Reddy was spiritually inclined from his earliest years. Perhaps this is to be attributed to the deep influence exerted by his father, Sri Subba Reddy. Sri Subba Reddy was a serious *sadhaka* who had undertaken journeys to North India in search of holy men, who could help him on the spiritual path.

Sri Balarama Reddy was a great admirer of Gandhiji, having been inspired by his life and ideals. He took part in the struggle for India's freedom launched by the Congress party. By consequence of this he was jailed for some months.

While yet a post-graduate student of Banaras Hindu University, he developed a desire for a full-fledged spiritual life, ignoring the temptations of material pursuits. Like his father he travelled to North India, in pursuit of his spiritual ideals, visiting all celebrated saints and yogis.

In 1931 he came into contact with Sri Aurobindo. While yet a resident of his ashram, he visited Sri Bhagavan. The first visit was in 1933, followed by one in 1935. The third visit was in 1936, during which he resolved to make Sri Ramanasramam his permanent abode. This was because of several factors. First and foremost, he felt that the mere presence of Sri Bhagavan was powerful. The penetrating silence and serenity around him were remarkable. The atmosphere of freedom and informality prevailing in the Ashram was also an added attraction. He was convinced that Self-realisation was the real goal of life. He was also convinced that Sri Bhagavan alone could

be his guide. He duly explained matters to Sri Aurobindo. After obtaining permission and blessings from him and Mother, he left Aurobindo Ashram. He came to Sri Ramanasramam for good in 1937. At first he was accommodated in Yogi Ramaiah's Cottage. Later he had to live in the town for some time. He shifted to Palakothu afterwards and was eventually accommodated at the Ashram itself.

Sri Balarama Reddy was indeed a highly blessed person in that he had close and continuous contact with Sri Bhagavan for more than a decade. Not many have had opportunity in such rich measure, of hearing explanations and observations on spiritual matters from Sri Bhagavan Himself — for years. He had the privilege of even sleeping in the hall, where Sri Bhagavan was reclining.



Sri Reddy's general erudition and knowledge of Sanskrit combined with his scriptural knowledge gave him a special status. He had the benefit of contact, at some time or the other, with practically all the contemporary leading spiritual personalities. On account of these factors he could be depended upon to give good explanations on religious questions. Also, his advice and full support were always avail-

able to the management in all matters concerning the administration of the Ashram.

Sri Balarama Reddy rarely came out of his room. All the same, inmates and visitors knew very well that he was an outstanding devotee who could be depended upon to give reliable, authentic interpretations on the teachings of Sri Bhagavan. It has been the practice (in the Ashram Office) in the past few years to send serious seekers to him. Sri Balarama Reddy always obliged, giving clarification, guidance and help.

Sri Reddy passed away in Bangalore after a brief illness.

Obituary**Ramaswami Pillai**

We had occasion to make a special mention of Sri Ramaswami Pillai in our last issue, on his reaching the proverbial age of 100. This great devotee is no more. He was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on January 14. He was then the oldest among the living devotees of Sri Bhagavan. It is remarkable that he had spent no less than 72 years of his life at the Ashram as a permanent resident.

Sri Ramaswami Pillai had done valuable service to the Ashram in various capacities, but above all he will be remembered for his enthusiastic participation in manual work of all kinds such as levelling the ashram grounds, laying out the garden, maintaining it, watering plants, etc.



path up the Hill suitable for Sri Bhagavan's daily walk.

This was arduous work which involved chiselling slabs of rock and forming steps on a steep slope. He braved it all and completed the work, single-handed.

Sri Ramaswami Pillai had a spirited way of singing spiritual songs in Tamil, especially those composed by Sri Bhagavan and by devotees (in his praise). His booming voice often drowned that of others while singing in chorus.

A few hours before his passing away a number of Ashram inmates had assembled in his room at his instance. At the request of Sri Ganesan he sang *Aksharamanamalai*, and other hymns from *Nooltirattu*. This ecstatic singing went on from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The end

came shortly after six, right in the midst of the sacred hour of *pradosha*.

Even more unique was his contribution of making a

FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS:

GURU POORNIMA (Vyasa Puja)	Wednesday	12.7.1995
KRISHNA JAYANTHI (Gokulashtami)	Friday	18.8.1995
VINAYAKA CHATHURTHI	Tuesday	29.8.1995
DAY OF BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT AT ARUNACHALA	Friday	1.9.1995
NAVARATHRI FESTIVAL (commences on)	Monday	25.9.1995
SARASWATHI PUJA	Monday	2.10.1995
DEEPAVALI	Monday	23.10.1995
SKANDASHASHTI	Sunday	29.10.1995
KARTHIGAI FESTIVAL (commences on)	Sunday	26.11.1995
KARTHIGAI DEEPAM	Tuesday	5.12.1995
SRI BHAGAVAN'S 116TH JAYANTHI	Saturday	6.1.1996
PONGAL	Monday	15.1.1996
CHINNA SWAMIGAL ARADHANA	Sunday	4.2.1996
MAHA SIVARATHRI	Saturday	17.2.1996
SRI VIDYA HAVAN	Friday	15.3.1996
TELUGU NEW YEAR'S DAY	Wednesday	20.3.1996
TAMIL NEW YEAR'S DAY	Saturday	13.04.1996

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I, V.S. Ramanan, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: 31.3.95

Signature of the Publisher: (SD) V.S. Ramanan

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