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

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--- Editor.

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The Mountain Path

The aim of this journal is to set forth the traditional wisdom of all religions and all ages, especially as testified to by their saints and mystics, and to clarify the paths available to seekers in the conditions of our modern world.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
A CHINESE proverb says that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. In the spirit of this saying it would be relevant to discuss the basics, whether they relate to religion or any other subject.

It is interesting to study how the religious propensities of an individual are shaped or formed. Initially, in the formative years, there is the influence of the parents, which is substantial. In certain families these traditions can be very strong and handed down as a precious legacy from generation to generation. Then there is the impact of views and trends prevalent in contemporary society. The cumulative effect of these influences, both in a qualitative and quantitative sense, is considerable. The actual effect of such influences may be modulated by the mental make-up and mode of receptivity of the person concerned.

What is of greater importance is the fact that there is an internal reserve of wisdom in each person; external influences only augment this innate capacity. It is not merely an important factor. It is the decisive one.

The rough analogy of a voyage by ship would be helpful to an understanding of the subject. The captain of a ship sets sail on receiving sailing orders. Thereafter, that is, once the ship is sea-borne, he is on his own. He may face a heavy sea. Or, it may be that there is only a cupful of wind. Whatever be the situation, the captain has to display seamanship and manage it, all by himself.

The time, place and circumstances of one's birth are not under one's control. Thus, one gets started in life unawares. However not all the subsequent events are entirely beyond one's imagination or control. As far as the question of religious faith is concerned, there is ample scope for everyone for picking up the rudiments, at the minimum.

Religious life has to be built up on solid foundations and this implies the formation of certain convictions.
The first and foremost requirement is, of course, firm faith in the supreme divine entity and its omnipotence. Any one of hundreds of scriptural texts is sufficient to inspire and promote belief in the Supreme. The Sruti says:

The one God who exists in subtle form in all beings pervades all and is the inner Self of all beings. He dwells in all beings; he is the witness; he is the intelligent principle; he is pure; and, he is bereft of all qualities.\(^1\)

The Tantra says:

I bow to Thee, the Everlasting cause of the world;
I bow to Thee, Pure Consciousness, the Soul that sustains the whole universe.\(^2\)

Life in a relative sense is full of misery. On an analysis we can see that it is comprised of fragments of mechanical activity. Shakespeare gives a beautiful description of life in general and this contains a break-up of time spent on various activities:

For what is in this world but grief and woe?
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times,—
So many hours must I tend my flock;
So many hours must I take my rest;
So minutes, hours, days, months and years
Pass’d over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.\(^3\)

Sankara observes as follows on the evanescence of life and the world:

The life of man is inconstant, like drops of water on a lotus leaf. The whole world is full of misery, seized by ego and disease.\(^4\)

No mortal can escape death; it is inalienable from life. It catches man unawares and its special power lies in this element of surprise. One should therefore recognise beyond doubt the inevitability of death. The following lines from Samuel Johnson throw light on this vital subject:

The busy day, the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;
His frame was firm — his powers were bright,
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.
Then with no fiery throbbing pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the nearest way.\(^5\)

Prayer is an integral element of religious life. It is an all-embracing term

\(^1\) Svetasvatara Upanishad, VI. 11.
\(^2\) Mahanirvana Tantra.
\(^3\) King Henry’s speech, The Third Part of King Henry VI, Act II, Scene V.
\(^4\) Dwadasa Panjarika Stotra.
\(^5\) On the death of Mr. Robert Levet, a practiser in physic.
and its essential purpose is invoking the aid of the Divine. It may be done in ritualistic or non-ritualistic fashion. Japa and recitation of sacred texts can also be classified as prayer. At its ideal best, prayer should exclude all kinds of temporal aims or aspirations and done solely for spiritual ends. But in practice the varieties of prayer are legion and the purposes, widely different. The important point is that it is efficacious and should be cultivated as a routine of daily life. Tennyson’s lines on the subject are inspiring:

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this would dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge defines prayer in these terms:

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.

Thomas Parnell describes the highest kind of prayer:

Remote from man, with God he passed the days,
Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise.

It is essential to cultivate the virtue of dispassion. This results in contentment. Sankara commends dispassion in the following lines:

Make of a temple or tree your home,
Clothe yourself in the skin of a deer,
And use the bare earth for your bed.
Avoiding gifts and sense delights:
Could any fail to be content,
Blest with dispassion such as this?

Jesus Christ commends an attitude of detachment even in regard to our daily necessities. These burdens can safely be left to the Lord:

Therefore I say unto you. Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink : nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not much better than they?

It is patent that the conduct of a man who takes to a religious life should be in strict conformity with moral and ethical

6 Idylls of the King. The Passing of Arthur.
7 The Ancient Mariner.
8 The Hermit.
9 Dwadasa Panjarika Stotra.
10 St. Matthew, 25-27.
codes. In this respect the 'don'ts' are perhaps easier enumerated than the 'do's. By universal acceptance, the clear guideline is that pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth — known as the seven deadly sins — should be eschewed.

Sri Krishna explains to Arjuna how negative qualities take man off the track:

Know that rajas, which is of the nature of passion, as born of cupidity and attachment. It binds the soul through attachment to actions and their fruits, O son of Kunti!

And know that tamas the deluder of all beings, as born of ignorance. It binds the soul through error, sloth and sleep.\

Oliver Goldsmith in his 'Village Preacher' gives a wonderful description of the ideally pious and religious man who possesses all good virtues and also shows the right path to others. The village preacher was 'more skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.'

The preacher was of a highly charitable disposition and so full of love for fellow men that he helped the poor in all possible ways:

Pleased with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits, or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

As the ideal shepherd the preacher tried all means to uplift his flock:

And, as a bird to each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allur'd to brighter worlds and led the way.

The village preacher's life was so full of dedication to the divine that even those with little faith were brought on to the right path:

Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.

These descriptions are rounded off with a tribute to the personality of the preacher, as a whole:

As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

It is immaterial whether Goldsmith had any particular person in mind while writing this, or he intended to give a poetic description of the ideal man of God. The important point is that we have a clear idea of the qualities and attitudes

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11 Bhagavad Gita, XIV, 7-8.
12 The Deserted Village.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
that one should necessarily possess for leading the higher life.

Leading a life in strict accordance with moral and ethical codes confers great satisfaction. But this should not lull one into spiritual inactivity and stagnation. The requirements for a full-fledged religious life are far more rigorous. Commitment to meditational methods and intensity of practice in accordance with them are essential requirements.

It should be remembered that salvation is the ultimate motivation for all religious practice. This can come only through mystic experience.

Mystics declare that their experience of unification with the divine is inexpressible. They are transported to a state of unity beyond all distinctions. Only through such experience can spiritual perfection be achieved.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana has often clarified that perfection is our real nature. Regarding sadhana Maharshi says, "What we do really amounts to the removal of obstacles for the revelation of our true Being. Meditation or vichara is thus a reversion to our true nature."\(^{17}\)

A categorical assurance on the efficacy of spiritual practice is contained in Maharshi’s reply to a question on the subject:

Devotee: Are our attempts sure to succeed?

Maharshi: Realisation is our nature. It is nothing new to be gained. What is new cannot be eternal. Therefore there is no need for doubting if one would lose or gain the Self.\(^{18}\)

A seeker can never rest on his oars. He has to proceed on and on — 'to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.'

\(^{17}\) Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, p. 376 (1994 Edn.).

\(^{18}\) Ibid, p. 376 (1994 Edn.).

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In order to arrive at having pleasure in everything,
Desire to have pleasure in nothing.

In order to arrive at possessing everything,
Desire to possess nothing.

In order to arrive at being everything,
Desire to be nothing.

In order to arrive at knowing everything,
Desire to know nothing.

— St. John of the Cross.
A Devotee’s Reminiscences

By Lucia Osborne

Over the years the same questions and doubts kept on cropping up and Bhagavan kept on explaining again and again tirelessly, patiently from various angles adapted to the level of understanding of the questioner.

On Renunciation

Questions about renunciation were asked frequently and the explanation that Bhagavan gave usually was that true renunciation is in the mind and is neither achieved by physical renunciation nor impeded by the lack of it. The life of action need not be renounced. If one meditates for an hour or two every day then the current of mind induced will continue to flow even in the midst of work. It is possible to perform all the activities of life with detachment and regard only the Self as real. Actions tend to express and follow the line taken in meditation.

People sometimes assume ochre robes and play the part of renunciates when they have comfortable assured incomes or are looked after by someone who has to work to enable the renunciate not to work. With others it may be escapism from performing their duties in life.

Bhagavan never encouraged young people to leave home and give up their duties in life. When a man is ready for a life of pure contemplation everything falls into place of its own accord for him to do. “Sannyasa means renouncing one’s individuality, not shaving one’s head and putting on ochre robes”, Bhagavan affirmed. He also said, “A man may be a householder but if he does not think he is one, he is a sannyasin. On the other hand he may be wearing ochre robes and wander about but so long as he thinks he is a sannyasin, he is not one. To think about one’s renunciation defeats the purpose of renouncing .... why should your occupation or duties in life interfere with your spiritual effort? .... It is wrong to suppose that if one is fixed in the Self one’s duties in life will not be properly performed.”

Nowadays one comes across so called communes, usually in the countryside, where a group of people lead a spiritual life and practise sadhana. If combined with work which it usually is, it has more chance of success.

In the selfless performance of plain duty man mounts higher spiritually. Huang Po cautions not to permit the events of our daily life to bind us but never to withdraw from them. Only by thus acting can one become liberated.

The unreality of the world

Some devotees found it difficult to believe that we are unreal, dreaming ourselves and the world. Bhagavan explained: “Man identifies himself with the body which is insentient .... A
spurious 'I' arises between pure consciousness and the insentient body and it imagines itself to be limited to the body. Seek this and it will vanish like a phantom. The phantom is the ego or mind or individuality." The whole sadhana consists in the illusory limited self — the individuality — finding out that it never ceased to be the Self.

On another occasion, Bhagavan said: "Everything is unreal, like dream objects. A jnani's job is to awaken the ignorant to the fact that what they see and feel is unreal and the Reality is their own Being. This can be compared to an elephant dreaming of a lion and suddenly waking up and finding that the lion is unreal and that it alone is real. The elephant is the jiva or individual, the dream is the unreal world and the lion the jnani or Guru. The Guru is the link between the unreal and the real."

Chuang Tsu says, "... By and by comes the great awakening, and then we find out that this life is really a great dream. Fools think they are awake now and flatter themselves they know if they are really princes or peasants. Confucius and you are both dreams, and I who say you are dreams, I am but a dream myself."

That there is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond itself, is the view of Einstein. In other words, the world is a reflection of the 'beyond' and to a discerning mind symbols become evident. For instance, diamond and coal both consist of the same chemical substance carbon and point to the fundamental unity of all substances and their inherent faculty of transformation, as explained in The Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism. It displays all colours but a pure diamond is colourless, itself. This symbolises the transcendental state of emptiness or the void and the relation between the highest and the ordinary state of consciousness. To put it simply, a cup or a room both consist of space encircled by matter — porcelain bricks. The emptiness or void in the cup or room which gives itself to so many uses, is what is of importance. The matter encircling the space serves a purpose. Both point to a profound parallelism between the material and the immaterial world.

The faculty of transformation as shown in coal and diamond is universal. It applies to matter as well as to living organisms and to the psychic forces inherent in both. What about food? Whatever we eat turns into the body and affects the mind. People in South India, for instance, are predominantly vegetarian and of a gentler disposition than those in other parts. It reminds one of Walter de la Mare's quaint little poem:

It is an odd thing
As odd as can be
That whatever Miss T eats
Turns into Miss T...

Buddha spoke of the void containing
millions of universes, a void which is no void or the All-source or more than anything one could say or imagine. It is not augmented by the appearance of worlds nor diminished by their disappearance. Like a screen which remains unchanged whether pictures appear or disappear on it. We are caught up in the pictures. Spiritual Reality is the absence of all particularised relative realities, all particularised forms of knowledge or concepts.

Support to Sadhana

Before a child can walk it is supported on both sides and held up. At it gains strength and confidence the support diminishes and finally ceases, so that it can learn to walk alone not without falls and stumbles, till walking becomes natural. Similarly with sadhana; when I first came to Bhagavan and started to meditate according to his teaching the Grace and support were tremendous, a time of discovery and sheer wonder. Such undeserved Grace may also be vouchsafed to those who need more encouragement than others to make them know what the real aim is.

Normally we are submerged in the innumerable shifts and changes of life and so we are caught up in the world with its troubles and confusions. To be deluded and to suffer belongs to the state of all human beings interspersed with a little unsteady happiness. We live in a belt of illusory time with birth, old age and death. It is in this state, which is said to be superior to the state of angels, that we can work out our destiny and awaken to our primordial divine state in timelessness where there is no birth or death. It is a return to the All-source relatively speaking because the departure was an illusion, a dream from which one has to wake up.

If a man is well he takes it for granted. When he returns to well-being after severe illness or suffering, how great and precious is his well-being! How much more so, how sublime the return to the All-source after the suffering of embodied existence which is said to be the greatest suffering?

Meditation that leads to Self-realisation is neither idle reverie nor vacant inaction but an intense inner struggle to master the mind and then we use it like any other instrument, like a silent missile to penetrate the barrier of the five senses and the discursive intellect. It is the greatest, the most worthwhile effort a human being is capable of. It demands determination, steadfastness and courage, particularly so when after a period of Grace one feels abandoned, desperate at being left alone to struggle like a deer that is trapped. That is the time when one can rise much higher than when one is made to feel good and successful by self-styled gurus with some siddhis (supernatural powers) like thought-reading and hypnotic or magnetic powers. It is the ego which feels good and ‘special’.

“God, Guru and the Self are the same”, Bhagavan affirmed. He said, “Grace is always there. We are never out of its operation. It is only the clouded mind which does not feel it. Yet, through effort it can experience Grace ...."
The Pillar of Cloud

By John Henry Newman

John Henry Newman (1801-1890), created Cardinal in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII, was a Tractarian leader in the Church of England. This poem, popularly known as Lead Kindly Light, was composed by him when, on his way from Sicily to France his boat was becalmed for several days in the Strait of Bonifacio.

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
    Lead thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home, —
    Lead thou me on!
Keep thou my feet! I do not ask to see
    The distant scene — one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
    Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
    Lead thou me on;
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,
    Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
    Will lead me on,
O’er moor and fen, O’er crag and torrent, till
    The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile
    Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.
MISS UMADEVI, a Polish lady convert to Hinduism, asked Sri Bhagavan:

I once before told Sri Bhagavan how I had a vision of Siva at about the time of my conversion to Hinduism. A similar experience recurred to me at Courtallam. These visions are momentary. But they are blissful. I want to know how they might be made permanent and continuous. Without Siva there is no life in what I see around me. I am so happy to think of Him. Please tell me how his vision may be everlasting to me.

Maharshi: You speak of a vision of Siva. Vision is always of an object. That implies the existence of a subject. The value of the vision is the same as that of the seer. (That is to say, the nature of the vision is on the same plane as that of the seer). Appearance implies disappearance also. Whatever appears must also disappear. A vision can never be eternal. But Siva is eternal.

The pratyaksha (vision) of Siva to the eye signifies the existence of the eyes to see; the buddhi (intellect) lying behind the sight; the seer behind the buddhi and the sight; and finally the Consciousness underlying the seer. This pratyaksha (vision) is not as real as one imagines it to be, because it is not intimate and inherent; it is not first hand. It is the result of several successive phases of Consciousness. Of these, Consciousness alone does not vary. It is eternal. It is Siva. It is the Self.

The vision implies the seer. The seer cannot deny the existence of the Self. There is no moment when the Self as Consciousness does not exist; nor can the seer remain apart from Consciousness. This Consciousness is the eternal being and the only being. The seer cannot see himself. Does he deny his existence because he cannot see himself with the eyes as pratyaksam (in vision)? No! So, pratyaksha does not mean seeing, but BE-ing.

Talk No. 450, Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, pp. 423-426 (1994 Edn.).
“TO BE” is to realise — Hence I AM THAT I AM. I AM is Siva. Nothing else can be without Him. Everything has its being in Siva and because of Siva.

Therefore enquire “Who am I?” Sink deep within and abide as the Self. That is Siva as BE-ing. Do not expect to have visions of Him repeated. What is the difference between the objects you see and Siva? He is both the subject and the object. You cannot be without Siva. Siva is always realised here and now. If you think you have not realised Him it is wrong. This is the obstacle for realising Siva. Give up that thought also and realisation is there.

D: Yes. But how shall I effect it as quickly as possible?

M: This is the obstacle for realisation. Can there be the individual without Siva? Even now He is you. There is no question of time. If there be a moment of non-realisation the question of realisation can arise. But as it is you cannot be without Him. He is already realised, ever realised and never non-realised.

Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether He appears or vanishes; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please, it is not surrender but command to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden; you have no longer any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is bhakti.

Or, enquire to whom these questions arise. Dive deep in the Heart and remain as the Self. One of these two ways is open to the aspirant.

Sri Bhagavan also added: There is no being who is not conscious and therefore who is not Siva. Not only is he Siva but also all else of which he is aware or not aware. Yet he thinks in sheer ignorance that he sees the universe in diverse forms. But if he sees his Self he is not aware of his separateness from the universe; in fact his individuality and the other entities vanish although they persist in all their forms. Siva is seen as the universe. But the seer does not see the background itself. Think of the man who sees only the cloth and not the cotton of which it is made; or of the man who sees the pictures moving on the screen in a cinema show and not the screen itself as the background; or again the man who sees the letters which he reads but not the paper on which they are written. The
objects are thus Consciousness and forms. But the ordinary person sees the objects in the universe but not Siva in these forms. Siva is the Being assuming these forms and the Consciousness seeing them. That is to say, Siva is the background underlying both the subject and the object, and again Siva in Repose and Siva in Action, or Siva and Sakti, or the Lord and the Universe. Whatever it is said to be, it is only Consciousness whether in repose or in action. Who is there that is not conscious? So, who is not realised? How then can questions arise doubting realisation or desiring it? If I am not pratyaksha to me, I can then say that Siva is not pratyaksha.

These questions arise because you have limited the Self to the body, only then the ideas of within and without, of the subject and the object, arise. The objective visions have no intrinsic value. Even if they are everlasting they cannot satisfy the person. Uma has Siva always with Her! Both together from Ardhanaariswara.

Yet she wanted to know Siva in His true nature. She made tapas. In her dhyana she saw a bright light. She thought: “This cannot be Siva for it is within the compass of my vision. I am greater than this light.” So she resumed her tapas. Thoughts disappeared. Stillness prevailed. She then realised that BE-ing is Siva in His true nature.

Murganar cited Appar’s stanza:

“To remove my darkness and give me light, thy grace must work through ME only”.

Sri Bhagavan mentioned Manickavachagar’s:

“We do bhajana and the rest. But we have not seen nor heard of those who had seen Thee.”

One cannot see God and yet retain individuality. The seer and the seen unite into one Being. There is no cognition, nor the cognised. All merge into One Supreme Siva only!

Sri Bhagavan pointed out the error in the common notion of the pancha kosas (five sheaths) namely, matter, life, mind, intellect and bliss as sheaths fitted one within another and having the Self innermost. He said that an apt analogy for the five sheaths would be the ‘scented kerchief’. It has material (cotton or silk), texture, dimension, colour and scent, corresponding to the five sheaths. But the five are not distinct from one another, they co-exist together in every fibre of the kerchief. Likewise the five sheaths are together integrated in the Self.

— Sri Ramana Reminiscences, p.18.
VEDANTA is the end of knowledge, the goal of wisdom, the limit of all that we can know.

Although Vedanta appeared for the first time in India, it is not a narrow national creed; it is not a creed which is confined to any restricted geographical area. It is as wide as humanity. And that is why people everywhere — people in the West, people in the Middle East and people in the Far East — are turning towards Vedanta more and more. Beginningless and eternal, Vedanta has no human author.

There are critics who say that Indian philosophy, especially Vedanta, is nothing more than a set of dogmas which will not stand the white light of criticism. These critics believe that Vedanta has to be blindly accepted and that there is no scope for enquiry. But they do not know what it means. It is true that the Vedas including the Upanishads are considered to be supremely authoritative, as revealed truths. But the acceptance of the authority of the Veda is not in any way contrary to the spirit of investigation or enquiry. In order to understand the truths of the Veda and in order to assimilate the doctrines that we find in Vedanta, we have to employ our faculties of reasoning, our powers of criticism.

Sankara says in his commentary on the Vedanta Sutra that what is accepted without proper enquiry will not lead a person to the final goal. On the contrary, such acceptance will result only in evil, in something which is detrimental to our spiritual progress. That is why the first sutra (aphorism) of Badarayana’s work speaks about enquiry: Athato brahma jijnasa (Then therefore, the enquiry into the nature of Brahman). Badarayana’s work is the first extant enquiry into the truths of the Vedanta. And all the acharyas who followed him have not deviated from this tradition of not blindly believing in what Vedanta has to teach. They have stressed the importance of inquiring into its doctrines over and over again, without ever tiring of the process.

In the area of scientific knowledge one can bank on the discoveries of other persons. Newton discovered the law of gravitation and Einstein formulated the principle of relativity. The other scientists take it for granted that these principles are valid. It is not so in the area of spirituality. If a Sankara discovered the truth...
of Brahman, we cannot say that there is nothing for us to do. Everyone has to discover afresh for oneself. That is why the truth of Vedanta can never become old; it will always be new. Each one has to testify from his own experience to the truth of Vedanta, to the glory of the Vedas.

Sravana (hearing the Veda or studying it) is the beginning of the student’s life. It should be followed by manana. This is revolving in one’s own mind what one has studied — inquiring with the help of the sharpened intellect. As one of the Upanishadic texts puts it, the highest Self is to be seen through a keen intellect. It is through the one-pointed mind, the keenly sharpened intellect that the highest truth is to be realised. One should be alert intellectually; he who is indolent cannot enter into the portals of wisdom.

It is here that there is a great difference between philosophy as understood in India and as it is understood in the West. While for the Western philosopher metaphysics is only a matter of theoretical understanding, for the philosopher in India its aim is intuitive experience. Armchair theorising is not enough if we are to come by philosophic truth. While in the West philosophy is said to have begun in wonder, in India philosophy is offered as a reply to the challenge of life. Ancient Greece was the mother of Western metaphysics; and Thales who is regarded as the father of Greek philosophy had no practical interest in his philosophising. He tried to account for the things constituting the worlds in terms of water. He said:

Water is the root element of the universe.

From water the universe comes into existence.

In water the universe resides. And into the Water the universe is dissolved. Water is the parent of all that there is.

Here there is no intimate connection between speculation and life. All the philosophers that followed Thales took him as their model. Modern philosophy is indebted to ancient Greece. It has kept to the tradition of considering philosophy to be a matter of theorising.

But in India it was not so. Philosophy functioned in this country in the context of practical life. The great problem that any human being has to face is the problem of misery, the problem of finitude, the problem of birth and death. No one can escape this life-problem which is the problem of death as well. Why do we die? What is meant by death? What is its significance? If death is the end of us all, then why should we be born at all? Where were we before we were born? Was there existence before birth in a body? When the body perishes, does the soul survive or not? Is there a soul? Is there a Self? Now, these are practical problems and not mere matters of theory. It is in this context that philosophy is pursued in our country.

I am never tired of quoting in this connection the instance of Nachiketas. Nachiketas was a young lad. He began to philosophise not in abstraction, but in the context of actual life. He saw several people holding different views about the nature of life.

He saw on the one hand materialists,
naturalists and accidentalists who argued that there was nothing beyond nature; that there was nothing other than matter; that the body was the man; and, that 'death' was the end of all. According to them there is no moral code which one need obey; there is no goodness, there is no beauty, there is no truth, there is no spirit. Their ideal amounted to this: 'As long as you live, live in a pleasant way, for who can demonstrate that there is something left after the body is dissolved? Beg, borrow, or steal—but live happily.'

On the other hand, Nachiketas also saw people who said that there was a spirit which defied the ravages of time, which cannot be confined in space; that spirit transcends the limits of this world and our body.

Nachiketas wanted to know which of these two views was the true one. And when he was in the land of death he felt that it was the only opportunity for him to discover the truth about the problem of life and death. He beseeched Yama, the Lord of Death to enlighten him on this question.1 Yama, the Lord of Death tried to dissuade this boy. He said: "Take anything else you like, but do not ask me this question. For, even the gods find it difficult to know the truth. Ask for things that are meet for you. You are still young. You are a child and what you require are toys. Ask for any toy you like. Ask for any means of pleasure. Do you want long life? You can have it. Do you want to rule over the earth? You can have that boon".

But Nachiketas could not be distracted from his pursuit of truth. Finding him a worthy disciple, the Lord of Death finally taught him the highest truth.

Vedanta has come down to us mainly in two forms — what have been called the saprapancha and the nishprapancha. You find these two forms of Vedanta even in some of the mantras of the Rig Veda. If you study the Purusha Sukta for instance, you have the picture of a cosmic reality. Reality or God appears there as all-pervading, with thousands of heads, arms and legs, eyes and ears — and thousands of bodies. The picture of the root reality that we get in the Purusha Sukta is of God as the ground of the Universe, God as the first cause of the world. This is the saprapancha view.

But if you turn to the Nasadiya hymn, you have a different picture. Reality is described there in negative terms as 'not this, not that'. At first, there was neither aught nor naught, neither day nor night etc. Ultimate reality cannot be defined in positive terms, because any definition would mean limitation. Here we have a glimpse of the ultimate reality, the un-

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1 This episode is found in the Katha Upanishad. Vajasravasa, father of Nachiketas, in a mood of anger declared that he gave his son to the Lord of Death as a gift (in the same manner as he gifted cows and other property to brahmanas). Accordingly Nachiketas arrived at the Land of Death. When he arrived Yama was not there and the boy was kept waiting for three days. Yama felt that a breach of the scriptural injunctions was involved since Nachiketas was kept for three days in his abode without food and honours due to a guest. By way of recompense he offered three boons to Nachiketas. The crux of the matter lies in the choice of boons. Nachiketas chose spiritual enlightenment in preference to material comforts and possessions offered to him by the Lord of Death.
conditioned absolute. This represents the nishpancha view.

When we come to the Upanishads we find two sets of passages — one describing Brahman as 'all this, all this', and the other indicating the nature of the ultimate reality as 'not this, not this'. So these are the two parallel lines of Vedanta that we find in the Vedic mantras, in the Upanishads and in the later development of Vedanta. I would describe these two aspects of Vedanta respectively as Prakrīti and Pauruṣa. Prakrīti Vedanta takes the emanation of the world to be real; it takes prakṛti as a principle which is real and which is the root of evolution. Pauruṣa Vedanta considers the Puruṣa, or the Self or Atman to be the only reality, and the world to be but an illusory manifestation, an appearance which is not real. So, using the terminology of the Sānkhyā I would describe theistic Vedanta as Prakrīti Vedanta and the nondualistic Vedanta as Pauruṣa Vedanta. Here Prakrīti and Puruṣa do not represent two complementary aspects of reality, as they do in the Sānkhyā.

In the Sānkhyā darsana Prakrīti and Puruṣa are co-eternal. Each is independent of the other; each represents one complementary aspect of reality. While Prakrīti is active and non-intelligent, Puruṣa is intelligent and non-active. It is through a collaboration between these two aspects of reality that evolution takes place. Apart from Prakrīti and Puruṣa the Sānkhyā does not recognise any ultimate reality, transcending these, serving as the ground of these. That is why Sānkhyā is called nīrisvāra. Nīrisvāra means not recognising the need for a God as the superintendent of the process of evolution, as the controller of Prakrīti, as the weilder of māyā. But in Vedanta, māya or Prakrīti is only a power of the ultimate reality, which is called God or Brahman, Isvāra or Atman. It is said: "Know māya as Prakrīti and the mayin as the Isvāra."

I have described the two tendencies of Vedanta. While Prakrīti Vedanta thinks of reality in terms of identity and difference, Pauruṣa Vedanta teaches that the Absolute spirit is non-dual. What is the difficulty, it may be asked, with the conception of identity and difference? Why should we not think of God as a whole of parts? What is wrong in imagining that Isvāra is the real creator of the universe? There is nothing wrong, and the view is true so far as it goes, but it is not true enough. This is because anything that is identical and different cannot be ultimate. Only a limited whole can be so. But that does not mean that Pauruṣa Vedanta which is Advaita has no need for God. It is by God's grace that one is attracted towards Advaita. In fact nothing can contradict Advaita because it does not contradict any system of philosophy. As Gaudapadā declares, 'Advaita is the supreme truth; all dualistic systems are variants thereof'. Advaita or the nondualistic Vedanta is the culmination of all systems including theistic Vedanta, and a true Advaitin will not quarrel with any system of philosophy, with any school of thought. To describe Advaita as a system is not quite correct. It is plenary experience which cannot be confined into a narrow set of ideas.

The Veda serves only as the starting point. What one has learnt from the Veda
must be understood through the exercise of reason, as far as reason might go. And what one has understood must be realised in one's life. These are the stages in the philosopher's progress towards the philosophic goal. And so when the critics say that the Veda is the final authority for the Vedantin and that he has nothing else to do except blindly believe in it, they do not understand what Veda means or what Vedanta stands for.

In certain cases it is not essential, it is not obligatory that one should pore over the ancient texts. Look at the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Consider the life of Sri Ramana. They did not study first and then realise. They realised first, and then when the Vedantic texts were read out to them, they said that they were all true. Referring to Gaudapada, Sankara says; 'A person such as he is not a slave of the Veda. The meaning that he assigns to Veda, that alone is the proper or true meaning'. And so it is the utterance of the sages that constitutes the Vedanta. There can be nothing more rational, more intelligible and more undogmatic than such a view of Vedantic teachings. I believe that it was to demonstrate to us the plenary sense of all the ancient texts of India that Sri Ramana appeared. What he lived and taught constitutes Vedanta.

If a philosopher merely theorises, tries to understand through his intellect and is therewith contented, he is not a true philosopher according to Indian standards. He must make what he has understood as part and parcel of his life. He must realise the truth of philosophy. He must transmute his life, sublimate his passions, overcome the lower instincts and impulses, transcend all limitations.

The state that lies beyond all limitations is known as: anubhava, sakshatkara, moksha, apavarga or nirvana. Spiritual freedom or Self-realisation is the goal of philosophy in our country.
The Man who was Ramana

By Arthur Osborne

It was the most majestic film I have ever seen, the most awe-inspiring, and yet without incident. A view of Arunachala hill from the Ashram drive, and then a tall, frail light-complexioned man, with short white hair, descending the slope of the hill with the aid of a staff. Then he was seen coming out of the Ashram hall, stopping to smile to a baby, walking across the Ashram ground; just simple, everyday actions, and yet the beauty of it was breath-taking — the simplicity was so natural, the smile so spontaneous, the majesty so inherent.

His complexion was pale, almost golden, his white hair and beard always short, as he had a shave every full moon-day in the manner of sannyasins. Emaciated, aged beyond his years with the burden of our sorrows, stiff-kneed with rheumatism, he leaned heavily on his staff as he walked, his eyes cast down. There was an air of modesty, of utter simplicity, of a child-like defencelessness.

The mere sight of him walking across the Ashram ground was enough to grip the heart. People who seemed worldly would gaze after him, with love in their eyes.

The story of Sri Bhagavan is of the most simple. Born in a poor Brahmin family in South India, he went to a mission school where he learned a little English. He was a normal, healthy boy, more fond of sport than study. At the age of 17, when any adolescent might pass from boyhood to manhood, the great change came over him. One day a sudden, intense fear of death assailed him, a feeling of the immediate imminence of death. There was none to turn to, none to give help. He felt that he must face it alone. Lying rigid upon his bed, he tried to visualise, to dramatize death. He held his breath to make the experience more

From *Ramana Arunachala* (Sri Ramanasramam, 1994).
vivid, thereby unconsciously practising the technique of pranayama or breath control. He said: “Well then, now death is come. What does it mean? This body is dead. It will be carried to the burning ghat and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body am I dead? Is this body I?" All this was not dull thought. Vividly the living truth flashed on him that he was not the inert body nor the thoughts that pass and are gone; he was the eternal I, the deathless Spirit. And in that moment death was dead and he had awakened into Enlightenment of the eternal Self. A lifetime of striving and sadhana was, for him, compressed into that brief moment. Theory he learnt later and recognised it, just as a woman who had borne a child might read afterwards about child-birth.

His whole manner of living was changed. He lost all interest in worldly things and would fall constantly into immersion in the Bliss of the Self. His elder brother, who, under his uncle, was in charge of the family, the father being
dead, resented the change and rebuked him one day for behaving like a sadhu while enjoying the benefits of family life. The young Ramana, recognizing the justice of the rebuke, secretly left home and went to the sacred hill of Arunachala where he remained for fifty-four years until, on April 14th, 1950, he parted from the body he had worn.

For some time after his arrival at Arunachala he remained immersed in the effulgence of bliss, barely conscious of his body, not needing it, not speaking or moving and scarcely eating, so that to onlookers it appeared to be the most intense tapas.

It was not really tapas at all. He was simply ignoring the body he had ceased to need. He himself once indicated that by saying: "I did not eat, so they said I was fasting; I did not speak so they said I was mouni". He was already a jivan-mukta in unwavering consciousness of identity with the Self and had no karma left to wipe out, no sin to atone for, no further goal to attain.

For a while he made his abode in the underground vault of the great temple at Tiruvannamalai and, immersed in samadhi, took no heed of the ants, mosquitoes and vermin, though his back and thighs became an open-wound from them. Some sadhus took him a single cup of thin gruel daily, which was all his food. Finally they carried him out bodily while he was in samadhi.

His body was so neglected that it might not have endured long and he might have effortlessly discarded it. So the story would have ended. But for us the story began when compassion for those who gathered around, seeking his Grace and guidance, drew him back to a full bodily life. From then on there was a motive for continuing in bodily form — the motive of compassion. And yet it might equally well be said that there was no motive but a simple fulfillment of prarabdha karma, just as the sun gives life to plants and animals without purpose, simply by being itself. He compared the prarabdha karma of a jnani to the movement of an electric fan after the current has been turned off — it still continues to rotate from past momentum although no new momentum is added. Perhaps these two aspects of truth coalesce if one remembers that compassion in the jivan-mukta means not individual but cosmic compassion.

It is one of the spiritual paradoxes that he who lays down his life finds it; he who surrenders his individuality becomes more individual than any one else. The jivan-mukta has dissolved the ego which exploits and perverts the individual characteristics in a man, and therefore these characteristics are able to grow to their true likeness, neither stunted nor warped, shining forth more clearly than in other men. In two Masters who are perfect the divine Grace will be the same but the characteristics of the human vehicle quite different.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana was meticulously exact, closely observant, practical and humorous. His daily life was conducted with a punctiliousness that Indians today would have to call pure Western. In everything he was precise and orderly. The books were always in their places. The cloths covering the couch were scru-
pulsely clean and beautifully folded. The loin cloth, which was all he wore, was gleaming white. The two clocks in the hall were adjusted daily to radio time. The calendar was never allowed to fall behind the date. The routine of life flowed to a regular pattern.

He was affable and courteous to all comers. There was no pontifical solemnity in his expositions; on the contrary, his speech, whether on daily affairs or on doctrine, was vivacious and full of laughter. And so infectious was his laughter that even those who did not know Tamil would spontaneously join in. Right up to the end he joked, and yet his jokes also bore instruction. When the doctors were alarmed to see a new growth of tumour pushing up during his final sickness, he said, laughing, "Why do you worry? It's its nature to come up." When a woman beat her head against a post outside his room in grief, despite his insistence that the body's death is no cause for grief, he listened for a moment and then said: "Oh, I thought somebody was trying to break a coconut." A devotee asked why his prayers were not answered and Bhagavan replied, laughing: "If they were, you might stop praying."

His manner of life was of the most normal. It was no attitude of superiority that bent men's knees before him, for none could be more simple or natural; it was the spontaneous reaction of men to the Divine.

His face was like the face of water, always changing and yet always the same. He would be laughing and talking, and then he would turn graciously to a small child or hand a nut to a squirrel that hopped on to his couch, from the window, or his radiant, wide open eyes would shine with love upon some devotee who had just arrived or was taking leave. And then, in silence, a moment later, his face would be rock-like, eternal in its grandeur.

The love that shone in his eyes, the luminous understanding, cannot be described. Someone has come to the Ashram broken down with the hopeless grief of bereavement, and Bhagavan, after hearing the story, has simply looked, no word spoken, and peace flooded the soul.

An old pandit who knew Sri Ramana as a boy had visited many yogis and decided to visit the Yogi Ramana also and discuss with him. But, standing before the couch, he felt his whole body electrified with awe and, before he knew what had happened, had fallen on his face before him. Little children were drawn to him and gladdened by his smile. A coolly picked up a blown sheet of paper and, seeing his picture on it, exclaimed "Bhagavan!" and folded it reverently to take away with him. Animals were drawn to him like people. Once he came back late from his afternoon walk on the hill. And while devotees clustered in groups or sat waiting or followed him up the hillside, a pair of monkeys came to the doorway of the hall and forgetting their fear of people, came inside and gazed anxiously at the vacant couch. A monkey that has been tended by humans is ostracised by its fellows on its return to wild life, but any that had been tended
by Bhagavan was gladly received. Having transcended the ego, he had transcended fear and antagonism, and the animals sensed this. A snake crept over his leg and he did not move or shrink. When a devotee asked him later what it felt like to have a snake pass over one, he replied, laughing: "Cold and moist."

During the last years the pattern of his daily life was as follows: At five o'clock in the morning the hall in which he had been sleeping on the couch was opened and devotees came in and sat in meditation while the Vedas were chanted. At six he went to the bathroom and at seven there was breakfast in the Ashram dining hall. Devotees sat before him again in the hall from eight till eleven with a break of about half an hour at 10 o'clock. Sometimes all sat silent, and the silence was vibrant with his grace. It was a peace and fullness in which words would be a distraction; or it was an intense spiritual striving watched and guided by him, though he might seem to take no notice. Sometimes it happened that someone would ask questions or sing in praise of Bhagavan. The mail arrived between nine and ten, and Bhagavan would read letters and look at newspapers, yet without breaking the current of silence in the hearts of those whom he was guiding. He did not answer letters himself but handed them over to the Ashram Office, and the replies were submitted to him for approval the same afternoon.

Lunch was at eleven, and during the last years Bhagavan consented to rest his frail body for awhile after lunch, so the hall was closed to devotees. Their loss was the squirrels' gain, for the whole floor was strewn with nuts. Devotees came to the hall again from three to nearly five, when Bhagavan used to walk on the hill for about half an hour. But during the last two years or so he was too infirm. His knees were swollen with rheumatism and he could only walk very slowly across the Ashram grounds. Before 5.30 the chanting of the Vedas began again. At 6.30 the women left the Ashram, and an hour later the men.

The consideration that Bhagavan showed to people and animals extended even to inanimate objects. Every action had to be performed worthily and nothing was to be wasted. I have seen the meticulous care with which a book was bound or a cutting pasted and have heard an attendant reproved for wanting to cut into a new sheet of paper for the purpose when one already started could be made to do. Our exploitation of Nature is ruthless today; it is more a rape than a harvesting; and it was a chastening sight to see the Divine Man so careful in the use of things. Food especially was never wasted. A gift of fruit might be distributed to any children who were present or to the monkeys who tried to steal it, but nothing of it was to be wasted. It is a mistaken notion that economy goes with parsimony and generosity with extravagance; very often the parsimonious are wasteful and the generous careful. When Bhagavan had finished a meal the banana leaf off which he had eaten it was as clean as though it had been washed. Not a grain of rice was wasted. In former years, when his body was more robust, he himself used to help in the kitchen, preparing meals; and he insisted that even the parings of the vegetables should
be used as cattle feed and not thrown away.

Although he was an absolute King and all craved to obey him, Bhagavan's life was, notwithstanding, a lesson in submission. Owing to his refusal to express any wish or desire, the Ashram authorities built up their own structure of regulations, and Bhagavan obeyed them without demur; so that if any devotee found them irksome he had before his eyes the example of Bhagavan's own submission. If ever Bhagavan resisted it was likely to be in the interests of the devotees, and even so it was usually in silence and very often in a manner dictated by his shrewd sense of humour. An attendant once rebuked a European woman for sitting with her legs stretched out. Bhagavan at once sat up crosslegged and continued so despite the pain caused by the rheumatism in his knees. When the devotees protested, he replied that the attendant's orders were for everyone, and it was only when the lesson had been driven home that he consented to relax.

But it was not only submission to regulations; it was submission to all the conditions of life and to pain and sickness which taught us silently that pain cannot disturb the equanimity of one who abides in the Self. Throughout the long and painful sickness that finally killed his body he submitted loyally, one after another, to the doctors who were put in
charge, never complaining, never asking for a change of treatment. If ever there was any inclination to try a different treatment it was only so that those who recommended it should not be disappointed; and even then it was made dependent on the consent of the Ashram authorities. If there is a tendency today to regard submission as spiritless it is only because egoism is regarded as natural. Doubtless, it is more spirited to fight for one's desires than to submit reluctantly to their denial, but Bhagavan was showing us the way to freedom from desires. Such freedom is not the submission of the abject; it is the joy of concord, for it is the Self, not a stranger, to whom one submits.

Bhagavan sought to free us from psychic as well as physical desires, and he therefore disapproved of all freakishness and eccentricity and of all interest in visions and desire for powers. He liked his devotees to behave in a normal and sane way. For he was guiding us towards the ultimate Reality where perceptions and powers which men call 'higher' or 'miraculous' are as illusory as those they call 'physical'. A visitor once related how his Guru died and was buried and then, three years later, returned in tangible bodily form to give instructions. Bhagavan sat unheeding. It was as though he had not heard. The bell rang for lunch and he rose to leave the hall. Only at the doorway he turned and quoted; “Though a man can enter ever so many bodies, does it mean that he has found his true Home?” One of the most delightful examples of his humour was when he was asked whether, if somebody who desired certain powers obtained moksha directly through the force of his sadhana, he would automatically acquire the powers he had wished for. Bhagavan replied: “If he obtained moksha it would not harm him even if he did have power.”

No one could be more simple and unostentatious. He called nothing his. He never asked for anything. He accepted the food and clothing that was necessary, that was all. The only outer gifts that one could make were fruit and flowers. And gifts were taken to the dining hall and shared among all equally. Bhagavan refused to have any special consideration shown to him. If those who were sitting in the hall made to rise when he entered he motioned to them almost impatiently to remain seated. I have seen him refuse to have an electric fan switched on because the devotees would not benefit equally. Afterwards ceiling fans were installed and all benefited alike. An attendant was placing a quarter mango on each person's leaf and slipped a half mango on to that of Bhagavan and he angrily put it back and took a small piece. One can say 'angrily' because he could show anger at misdemeanours on the part of attendants. They were small outer lapses that called for small outer disapproval; but with regard to the failures and shortcomings of the devotees his patience was inexhaustible. He never asked any to come or told any to go. He never pressed any to stay. And yet he watched over each one with the loving solicitude of a mother for her only child. Not that the solicitude was always outwardly manifested, however, for there were cases often enough when it might flatter the vanity of the devotee or arouse the jealousy of others, both of which
Bhagavan was shrewdly careful to avoid. Indeed, this care added to the sense of secrecy in his guidance, of which more will be said later.

There was never any question among the devotees what mood he was in, for he had no moods. How could he, when he never for a moment mistook the form for the Reality? No moods of abstraction were needed because, while fully human, he was also fully in samādhi, fully divine, alike when talking and when sitting silent. He merely responded according to the need of those who approached him, and therefore each one felt that he enjoyed his especial Grace. It was only the more observant who perceived that every devotee enjoyed his especial Grace. Being established immutably in the Reality beyond all forms, he saw forms and events not with the inherent and graded importance that they seemed to bear for us but sympathetically, with the importance that we gave them. And since each one thought his own problems important, each was delighted to find Bhagavan appreciating their importance. Pandits were sitting in the hall with Sanskrit texts which, now and again, they took up to Bhagavan to elucidate some point. A three-year old, not to be outdone, took up his book of nursery rhymes, and Bhagavan was no less gracious, showed no less interest. But the book was tattered, so he took it and supervised its mending and binding and gave it back next day renovated.

And yet sometimes he deliberately did not recognize the importance of men’s problems, for his ultimate purpose was to wean them from attachment to things and events. One of the Ashram staff died. His wife who had been on a visit and knew nothing about it came home in the evening and found him dead, and she could not control her grief. Bhagavan said: “What is she grieving about? Nothing is changed.” He said the same many times during the long months when his own body was approaching death.

To all he showed unfailing courtesy. Each comer felt at home, even though with no word spoken. If he greeted a newcomer in words it was usually to ask: “Have you been served food?” It was the first question he put to a visiting doctor a few days before the body’s end, when the pain was excruciating. And yet, behind the constant equal courtesy, there was detailed individual supervision of each devotee whose inner submission he had recognized. At first such a one might be encouraged with the daily attention of smile and friendly look. And then, for weeks or months, he might be apparently ignored, with only an occasional swift glance while he sat in meditation. If his ego had fed on the previous attention and he had imagined himself better and more favoured than others the apparent neglect might be a bitter tapas. When wisdom and steadfastness began to come he would receive an occasional smile of recognition or a deeper, fuller look from those radiant eyes of love.

It was not often that devotees spent the whole day in the Ashram Hall. Many of them were householders living in the small colony of bungalows that had sprung up around the Ashram, and they had their work and housekeeping to attend to. Some could come only in the early morning and evening. There were
also many who lived in other towns, where they had their work, and could come only for an occasional visit. Even the sadhus had to procure and prepare their food, for it was usually only visitors and newcomers who were invited to take their meals at the Ashram. This kind of life accorded well with the large element of karma-marga in Bhagavan’s teaching. Meditation on the inner Self and devotion to the Self manifested as Sri Ramana were stabilised by daily effort to cast off attachment and deny the ego in the work and relationships of life. Otherwise conditions would have been different, for, although Bhagavan gave no injunctions, everything shaped itself according to his will.

There were many who desired him to give injunctions, both for their own lives and for the Ashram management, but he would not. The most he would do was to show approval or disapproval of what was done or of any project that was announced to him, and even that not always. If asked point blank he would probably keep silent or reply: “If you want to do it, do.”

And yet his solicitous supervision did in fact cover the actions also of those who had submitted to him, and his approval or disapproval was usually clear enough, without being so explicit that stray comers who had not put themselves in his hands should demand that they also be given instructions. A devotee announced his plan to leave Tiruvannamalai and take up a job with a regular salary. Bhagavan replied, laughing: “Every one is free to make plans.” The plan did not come off. An attendant admired one of the political leaders of India and wished to go to Madras to see him when he paid a visit there. He asked permission, but the face of Bhagavan remained like stone and there was no reply. He went. He rushed from meeting to meeting, each time just missing the leader or failing to gain admission. He came back without seeing him, and Bhagavan teased him good-humouredly, “So you went to Madras without permission? Did you have a successful trip?” A few months after my arrival I had business in a neighbouring town and, imagining that the worldly affairs of a devotee would not interest Bhagavan, I simply asked permission to go for the day. Bhagavan gave permission but afterwards indicated that I should have explained the reasons for my going.

It might be asked why such hidden methods of guidance were necessary, why Bhagavan should not have given plain instructions. The most obvious answer would be that his grace and courtesy to all comers was such that he did not wish to make an invidious distinction between them and the devotees who had placed their lives in his hands and thereby acquired a right to his guidance. It may be also that he did not wish to provoke open questions as to his being a Guru or indiscriminate demands for initiation, since, as is explained later, this was to be understood by those who went beyond words.

But there was also a deeper, more essential answer: “By their fruit ye shall know them.” A man’s words and actions are the fruit of his nature. Bhagavan’s
silent teaching, working direct upon the heart, sought to rectify the devotee’s nature, and as a result sound fruit would spring from a sound tree. Control of his actions would have been a more external method, working from effect to cause rather than from cause to effect. It was best for the devotee to seek the true answer to a problem or way out of a situation in his heart, like a schoolboy doing a sum and bringing the answer up to his teacher; and then there would be a smile of approval and encouragement if the sum had been rightly solved, and if not it had to be worked out afresh; to have told the answer would have helped the schoolboy much less in his work.

General injunctions applicable to all alike, such as each religion imposes on its followers, would also have been inappropriate, since, as already explained, the purpose of Bhagavan was neither to found a new religion nor to restore the integrity of an existing one, but to open a path for all who turned to him from all religions.

Towards the end, Bhagavan was aged far more than his years. He looked more like 90 than 70. In one who had a strong constitution, who had scarcely known sickness except for the rheumatism of his last years, and who was impervious to grief or worry, anxiety, hope or regret, this would appear incredible; but it was
the burden of his compassion: "He who taketh upon himself the sins of the world." Devotees came and sat before him, burdened with sorrows, tormented with doubts, darkened with impurities, and, as they sat, felt themselves heart-free and lightened. How many have come and sat there weighed down with the grief of failure or bereavement, and the light of his eyes has dissolved their pain until they have felt a wave of peace flood their heart. How many have come primed with questions which seemed to them all important and which their thought and reading had failed to solve; it might be in desperate hope or as a challenge that they brought the questions, but as they sat there the questioning mind itself was brought to tranquillity and the questions faded out, no longer needing to be asked. And then, if they opened their hearts, a deeper understanding was implanted there. Those who sought refuge in him felt the burden of their karma lifted; and it was he who bore the burden. Even physical ailments have been known to diminish or disappear in his presence and to appear reflected in his own body.

Even the way of his discarding the body was supremely compassionate. There were many who believed that they could not endure or survive it. But when the sickness dragged on month after month, after the doctors had found it incurable and had declared that the pain must be intense although Bhagavan seldom gave any sign that he was suffering. The whole system was poisoned, and the last months were one long martyrdom. And yet to the last he insisted that all those who came to him should receive darshan twice a day, walking past the room where he lay. At the very end, when every touch was agony, he ordered the attendants to raise him to a sitting posture and he died sitting.

We shall not again see the divine grace in human form or the love shining in his eyes, but in our hearts he is with us and will not leave us. His grace continues to be poured out, not only on those who knew the miracle of his bodily form, but on all who turn to him in their hearts, now as before.
I have not given a clear picture of the man who was Ramana, but how can one portray the universal? What impressed one was the complete unselfconsciousness like that of a little child, his Divinity and intense humanity. The Divinity was recognised in the act of prostration and in addressing him in the third person as 'Bhagavan'. To have said 'you' would have been a jarring assertion of otherness. In speaking of himself, Bhagavan spoke very simply and said 'I' or 'this'. Only occasionally, when the meaning clearly indicated it, did he use the third person: "If you remember Bhagavan, Bhagavan will remember you." "Even if you let go of Bhagavan, Bhagavan will never let go of you."

He was unperturbed whatever happened; the majesty of his countenance was inexpressible; and yet it is no less true that he was swift and spontaneous in response and that his face was the most human, the most living, one had ever seen. He attained Realisation without learning and never displayed erudition, and yet he had made himself better versed in the scriptures than the pandits who came to him for elucidations. He was all compassion, and yet his countenance might appear immovable, like stone. He was all love, and yet for weeks together he might not favour a devotee with a single look or smile. He replied to all graciously, and yet many trembled and feared to speak to him. His features were not good and yet the most beautiful face looked trivial beside him. He often appeared scarcely to notice devotees, and yet his guidance was as unremitting then as it is now.

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**Perceiving**

By Wei Wu Wei

*There is no perceiver,*
*There is no object perceived,*
*Both are conceptual suppositions of relative (divided) mind, 'Perceiving' is subjectivity.*

The frequent statement that "see-er, see-ing, and seen are one", of do-er, do-ing, and done, or any other such 'trilogy', is misleading.

There is no such 'trilogy', there is no 'one', for the present participle 'ing' denotes Presence and excludes both do-er and deed, see-er and seen.

As relative 'mind' I am whatever is perceived within the limits of sensorial perceiving wherever and whenever perceiving occurs in space-time.

Absolutely I am the limitless Presence 'wherein' such perceiving seems to occur.
Dzogchen: The Path of Self-liberation
By Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche

The characteristic method of the Dzogchen teaching is the path of Self-Liberation. But Dzogchen is not only the title of a teaching. To know or discover the real sense of the Dzogchen teaching, you do not need the title of a book or teaching or some particular type of study because when you read or follow a book, you are constructing intellectual knowledge. You will never really discover your state of Dzogchen that way. You can discover it if you listen well and try to understand the meaning of the teaching and then use methods. Method means you work concretely with your experience; that is the only way you can discover the real meaning of Dzogchen. This does not belong to any kind of title or book. You must not be conditioned by books and try to understand what is being communicated. That is the principle of your capacity.

If you do not have the capacity to follow in that way in order to discover your state, then we say that person has no capacity to follow this teaching. But this does not mean that a person cannot read or analyse books.

Transformation
First of all you must understand what Self-Liberation means — what is the difference between the Path of Self-Liberation and the Path of Transformation. When we say transformation, we already have our concept of pure and impure vision. You

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remember how our state and its aspects are presented; with the symbol of the *vajra* with the two aspects of pure and impure dimensions. If you do not have that concept, then how can you transform and what do you transform? You are transforming impure vision into pure vision. You are transforming your five aggregates in five Dhyani Buddhas, and your five elements in the five *yum* of the Buddhas, your five emotions in the five wisdoms. You have a precise concept of pure and impure vision. So you also have the consideration that impure has no value, that it has the aspect of *samsara*. That is why you are transforming it in pure vision. So this is the principle of transformation.

**Self-Liberation**

When we speak about Self-Liberation we do not have this concept. Self-Liberation does not mean you are transforming something in something else. There is not even this concept of pure or impure. Of course this does not mean that when you are doing Dzogchen practice your impure vision disappears.

But when you are in a state of contemplation there is no consideration of pure or impure; then you are in a state of Self-Liberation.

In the Dzogchen teaching we use the symbol of the mirror in order to have knowledge, understanding. How can we have knowledge and understanding through the symbol of the mirror? First of all, with a mirror you must observe yourself, not only looking at objects, judging and thinking that this is good or bad, this is pure or impure. When you have this concept then you also have dualistic vision. How can you overcome this? You observe yourself instead of looking at objects. For example, if you are looking in a mirror, you can see your face, your existence. In this way you can discover, for example, what your face looks like. This means that you are observing yourself and you can discover your limitations, your condition and your existence.

But in general we do not observe ourselves, particularly when we study in an
intellectual way. When you have the concept that there is your point of view, then there is also the point of view of others. If you are convinced of your own point of view, then you must negate that of others. You are looking at an object and doing an analysis. This is very different from observing yourself.

Tawa

All traditions of sutra and tantra speak about the point of view or tawa, and every school or tradition has its tawa. If you are following a tradition such as Sakya, then you will learn the point of view of the Sakya. If you are following the Kagyu tradition then you will learn the Kagyu point of view. Then you will defend the Kagyu point of view and negate others. There are many arguments between schools and scholars. If you study the Madhyamika and Prajnaparamita texts, then you must follow one of these methods. First you study and follow one school of thought, then you study another and make a comparison. In any case there are many arguments. Why are there arguments and why has it developed this way? Because a point of view or tawa is developed looking at one object. You consider that this is good, that is bad, judging as though you were looking at an object. Your senses are pointed at an object and you do an analysis and form a judgment. In that way maybe you can develop some type of intellectual study. For example, if you want to give a university lecture, then you must be able to do some type of analysis, otherwise people will not consider you to be a scholar.

But that is not the solution for overcoming samsara or obtaining realization. Discovering your own real nature means that you must observe yourself rather than looking at objects. That is why in the Dzogchen teaching we use the example of looking in the mirror. Looking in the mirror is only an example, because of course you cannot discover all your limitations and problems in the mirror. Observing your limitations, your existence, your attitude and your intention, you can discover many of the sources of your problems. So this is one of the most important functions of the mirror. The mirror makes you understand that you must observe yourself, instead of judging others.

Potentiality

Another very important function of the mirror is for discovering what is meant by our potentiality. All sentient beings have infinite potentiality, not only human beings. But if we are human beings, we can observe and discover that we have great potentiality. How can we discover this potentiality and its nature? First of all, we must observe ourselves and then we know that we have this potentiality. Then, through the example of the mirror, we can understand what being in our real nature means. Knowing or being in our real nature means beyond judging and doing analyses. Then we learn with the example of the mirror.

For example, if there is a mirror in front of you, you look in the mirror and see different kinds of reflections. They may be nice or ugly things, big or small, different colours and shapes. When you look in the mirror, you are attached to the object which is reflected there.
Dualistic Vision

In the *sutra* teaching of the Buddha, it says that everything is based on interdependency. An object in front of the mirror and the mirror's capacity to manifest reflections are interdependent. Through that interdependence the reflection manifests. That reflection is unreal but you have a very precise idea that the object is real. You still remain in dualistic vision and with your concept that you are here and that you see in the mirror. Reflections appear in the mirror. They are unreal but the object is real. You are looking in the mirror but that is not real knowledge. Even if you have at least an idea of "unreal", it has no function. It is only intellectual knowledge. So this is how our normal condition is.

Being the Mirror

When we say that we have knowledge or we have discovered our real nature and we are in this nature, that means that we are "being" the mirror. You see, "being" the mirror or "looking" in the mirror are two completely different things. If we "are" the mirror, then we have no concept of dualistic vision.

If a reflection manifests in the mirror, why is it manifesting? There are two reasons. One is because the mirror has the capacity to manifest infinite reflections. This is its qualification.

The other reason is that when there is an object and the mirror has the capacity to manifest, that is normal, but the mirror has no idea of checking or accepting this object for reflecting. The mirror doesn't need any programme for that. This is what is called its qualification or infinite potentiality.

In the same way, we have infinite potentiality but we are ignorant of that. When we are ignorant of our real nature, then we always have the consideration that "I am here" and "the object is there", "I am looking and seeing an object", etc. We never discover that we are like a mirror. And if we never discover this, then of course there is no way that we can become the mirror. But when we discover that, then there is a possibility that we will be the mirror.

When you are the mirror, then you have no problems with reflections; they can be big, small, nice, ugly, any kind; the reflections are only a manifestation of your qualification. When you have no problems of reflections, then that means Self-Liberation. You are not changing or transforming something, you are only being in your real nature.

You remember "the same flavour" in Mahamudra teaching and the Dzogchen Semde. You can understand this if you are really being the mirror. Whether there is a nice or ugly reflection, there is no difference for you. When you are in your real nature there is no change at all. That is the real meaning of Self-Liberation.
Direct Introduction

When a teacher gives a direct transmission, it means that the teacher uses methods so that you can have an experience. With such experience, you discover or have an introduction to your primordial state, or we can say knowledge or understanding, or state of *rigpa*. You can use different names but it does not change it at all.

When we are speaking about practice, we say contemplation. Contemplation really means that you have that knowledge and that you are really being in that knowledge, like the mirror. Then we can say that we are in a state of contemplation. Until you have that experience of knowledge, until you discover that state, you can speak about contemplation but it is only a name. Contemplation is not only an idea but something we discover with experience. So that is the famous Dzogchen, the state of *rigpa*. Until we discover that state, Dzogchen is only a word.

Direct Experience

In the Dzogchen teachings, a teacher teaches you methods that you can apply for discovering that. When you say “I am practising or following Dzogchen teachings”, it doesn’t mean that you are doing some type of prayers or reciting a *mantra* or doing some visualization. It means that following a teacher and using methods, you discover that state. When you have discovered that state, then you still need many kinds of methods for realizing it. Discovering this state of your real nature and realizing it are completely different things.

Many people have the idea that when they have had some experience or discovery, that they are already enlightened. But this doesn’t mean they are enlightened.

The state of enlightenment means you have direct knowledge of what the state or *rigpa* is and not only learning through intellectual study.

When you follow teaching in an intellectual way, first you have many ideas — thinking, judging and making analyses. You can accept and follow these ideas; but if you have many problems, it means it is not real knowledge but rather like following something blindly because you haven’t had any direct experience.

So when we say direct introduction and experience for discovering our real nature, it means we have direct experience through our senses. And with these experiences then we discover.

For example, if I show you an object, you look at it and you have knowledge of its form and colour. Now if I ask you to forget about it, you can’t. If I ask you to change your idea, you can’t. Why? Because it is your direct experience. So, discovering your real nature means something like that.

When you are studying in an intellectual way you are following someone or someone’s ideas. For example, you can believe someone’s ideas today, but if you discover your state, may be it will not be true tomorrow. You can always change your ideas.

This problem will continue until you have discovered your state. This is the weak point of intellectual study.
Discovering

So when we say "discover", it means that you have a precise experience. Particularly when you are following Dzogchen teaching, you must discover your real nature directly with method. When you discover your nature, you discover the value of transmission at the same time. In this case you also discover the principle and function of the teaching. Discovering the principle of the teaching does not mean that you accept or decide something.

In the same way, you discover the value of the teacher through experience, not by deciding that he must be your root master. In general many people choose a root master perhaps because he is very famous or people consider him to be very important. And then if you don’t discover your real nature you always say, “Oh, this is my root master”, and then you go to someone else to try to discover it. This is an intellectual way of deciding who your root master is.

Nothing to Decide

There is nothing to decide for path, for teaching, for master; you don’t need to decide or accept anything at all. Particularly if you meet a serious Dzogchen teacher — you never accept a teaching, or teacher or transmission. The teacher only asks you to discover, gives you methods, and working together with these methods you try to discover that. When you have discovered one, you have discovered all. This is the base of the Dzogchen teaching. If you only open one eye, you can see everything. You don’t need to open your eyes one at a time in order to see. This is an example we use in the Dzogchen teaching. When we discover our real nature, we discover everything. For example, many Dzogchen masters never studied or learned in an intellectual way. When they received a precise transmission, they practised and used methods and then woke up and became learned and scholarly. That is an example. There really is that kind of function.

The principle is that we try to discover our real nature. To do this, firstly we must open our eyes, look at our situation, condition and limitations, and learn in a precise way. You remember the Buddha’s teaching on cause and effect. When you discover there is cause, then you discover that there is also effect. If you open your eyes without limiting (yourself) then you discover everything.
IT WAS half past four in the afternoon and the disciples were sitting before the Maharshi in the hall and were talking about a notification that had appeared in the dailies to the effect that a Mr. Hurst and a Buddhist Bhikku were intending to visit the Ashram. The clock struck five and there entered the hall a man in European costume bearing a plate of sweets and followed by a Buddhist monk. The visitors offered the sweets to the Maharshi and then, after making obeisance in the Eastern way, they both squatted on the floor before him. These were the visitors of whom the disciples had been talking. The man in English clothes was R. Raphael Hurst, a London journalist who was then on a visit to India. He was keenly interested in the spiritual teaching of the East and thought that by an intelligent study and appreciation of it the cause of co-operation between East and West might be greatly promoted. He came to Sri Ramanasramam after visiting many other ashrams. The bhikshu who came with him is also an Englishman by birth. He was formerly a military officer but is now known as Swami Prajnananda. He is the founder of the English Ashram, Rangoon. Both visitors sat spellbound before Maharshi and there was pin-drop silence.

The silence was broken by the person who had brought the visitors asking them if they would like to ask any questions. They were, however, not in a mood to do so, and thus an hour and a half passed. Mr. Hurst then stated the purpose of his visit. In a voice of intense earnestness he said that he had come to India for spiritual enlightenment. “Not only myself”, he added, “but many others also in the West are longing for the light from the East.”

The Maharshi sat completely withdrawn and paid no attention. One of those who were sitting there asked them if they had come to the East for a study of comparative religions. “No,” the Bhikshu replied, “we could get that better in Europe. We want to find Truth; we want the light. Can we know truth? Is it...
possible to get enlightenment?" The Maharshi still remained silent and in-drawn, and as the visitors wanted to take a walk, the conversation ended and all dispersed.

Early next morning the visitors entered the hall and put some questions to the Maharshi with great earnestness.

The conversation reproduced below is from rough notes taken while it was going on.

**Bhikshu** : We have travelled far and wide in search of Enlightenment. How can we get it?

**Maharshi** : Through deep enquiry and constant meditation.

**Hurst** : Many people do meditate in the West but show no signs of progress.

**Maharshi** : How do you know that they don't make progress? Spiritual progress is not easily discernible.

**Hurst** : A few years ago I got some glimpses of the Bliss but in the years that followed I lost it again. Then last year I again got it. Why is that?

**Maharshi** : You lost it because your meditation had not become natural (sahaja). When you become habitually inturned the enjoyment of spiritual beatitude becomes a normal experience.

**Hurst** : Might it be due to the lack of a Guru?

**Maharshi** : Yes, But the Guru is within. That Guru who is within is identical with your Self.

**Hurst** : What is the way to God-realisation?

**Maharshi** : **Vichara**, asking yourself 'Who am I' — enquiry into the nature of your Self.

**Bhikshu** : The world is in a state of degeneration. It is getting constantly worse, spiritually, morally, intellectually and in every way. Will a spiritual teacher come to save it from chaos?

**Maharshi** : Inevitably. When goodness declines and wrong prevails He comes to reinstate goodness. The world is neither too good nor too bad; it is a mixture of the two. Unmixed happiness and unmixed sorrow are not found in the world. The world always needs God and God always comes.

**Bhikshu** : Will He be born in the East or the West?

**Maharshi** : He might.

**Hurst** : What is the best way to attain Godhood?

**Maharshi** : Self-enquiry leads to Self-Realisation.

**Hurst** : Is a Guru necessary for spiritual progress?

**Maharshi** : Yes.

**Hurst** : Is it possible for the Guru to help the disciple forward on the path?

**Maharshi** : Yes.

**Hurst** : What are the conditions for discipleship?

**Maharshi** : Intense desire for Self-
Realisation, earnestness and purity of mind.

**Hurst** : Is it necessary to surrender one’s life to the Guru?

**Maharshi** : Yes. One should surrender everything to the Dispeller of Darkness. One should surrender the ego that binds one to this world. Giving up body-consciousness is the true surrender.

**Hurst** : Does a Guru want to take control of the disciple’s worldly affairs also?

**Maharshi** : Yes, everything.

**Hurst** : Can he give the disciple the spiritual spark that he needs?

**Maharshi** : He can give him all that he needs. This can be seen from experience.

**Hurst** : Is it necessary to be in physical contact with the Guru, and if so for how long?

**Maharshi** : It depends on the maturity of the disciple. Gunpowder catches fire in an instant, while it takes time to ignite coal.

**Hurst** : Is it possible to develop along the path of the Spirit while leading a life of work?

**Maharshi** : There is no conflict between work and wisdom. On the contrary, selfless work paves the way to Self-knowledge.

**Hurst** : If a person is engaged in work it will leave him little time for meditation.

**Maharshi** : It is only spiritual novices who need to set aside a special time for meditation. A more advanced person always enjoys the Beatitude whether he is engaged in work or not. While his hands are in society he can keep his head cool in solitude.

**Bhikshu** : Have you heard of Meher Baba?

**Maharshi** : Yes.

**Bhikshu** : He says that he will become an Avatar in a few years.

**Maharshi** : Everyone is an Avatar of God. “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.” Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Krishna, all are in you. One who knows the Truth sees everyone else as a manifestation of God.

**Bhikshu** : Will the Maharshi make a statement about Meher Baba?

**Maharshi** : What statement? That (the existence of an outer Avatar) is a question which seekers of Truth need not consider.

**Bhikshu** : Will the world be rejuvenated?

**Maharshi** : There is One who governs the world and it is His business to look after it. He who has created the world knows how to guide it also.

**Bhikshu** : Does the world progress now?

**Maharshi** : If we progress, the world progresses. As you are, so is the world. Without understanding the Self what is the use of understanding the world? Without Self-knowledge, knowledge of the world is of no use. Dive inwards and find the treasure hidden there. Open your heart and see the world through the eyes of the true Self. Tear aside the veils and see the Divine Majesty of your own Self.
The Real Nature of God

(From the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna)

A DEVOTEE: Has God a form or is He formless?

MASTER: God has form and, again, He is formless. Once upon a time a sannyasi entered the temple of Jagannath. As he looked at the holy image he debated within himself whether God had a form or was formless. He passed his staff from left to right to feel whether it touched the image. The staff touched nothing. He understood that there was no image before him; he concluded that God was formless. Next he passed the staff from right to left. It touched the image. The sannyasi understood that God had form. Thus he realized that God has form and, again, is formless.

But it is extremely difficult to understand this. Naturally the doubt arises in the mind: if God is formless, how then can He have form? Further, if He has a form, why does He have so many forms?

DOCTOR: God has created all these forms in the world; therefore He Himself has a form. Again, He has created the mind; therefore He is formless. It is possible for God to be everything.

MASTER: These things do not become clear until one has realized God. He assumes different forms and reveals Himself in different ways for the sake of His devotees. A man kept a solution of dye in a tub. Many people came to him to have their clothes dyed. He would ask a customer, 'What colour should you like to have your cloth dyed?' If the customer wanted red, then the man would dip the cloth in the tub and say, 'Here is your cloth dyed red.' If another customer wanted his cloth dyed yellow, the man would dip his cloth in the same tub and say, 'Here is your cloth dyed yellow.' If a customer wanted his cloth dyed blue, the man would dip it in the same tub and say, 'Here is your cloth dyed blue.' Thus he would dye the clothes of his customers different colours, dipping them all in the same solution. One of the customers watched all this with amazement. The man asked him, 'Well? What colour do you want for your cloth?' The customer said, 'Brother, dye my cloth the colour of the dye in your tub.' (Laughter.)

Once a man went into a wood and saw a beautiful creature on a tree. Later he told a friend about it and said, 'Brother, on a certain tree in the wood I saw a red-coloured creature.' The friend answered:

Reproduced with kind permission of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, pp. 845-7, Madras Edn. (1947).

1 Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar.
'I have seen it too. Why do you call it red? It is green.' A third man said: 'Oh, no, no! Why do you call it green? It is yellow.' Then other persons began to describe the animal variously as violet, blue, or black. Soon they were quarrelling about the colour. At last they went to the tree and found a man sitting under it. In answer to their questions he said: 'I live under this tree and know the creature very well. What each of you has said about it is true. Sometimes it is red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow, sometimes blue, and so forth and so on. Again, sometimes I see that it has no colour whatsoever.'

Only he who constantly thinks of God can know His real nature. He alone knows that God reveals Himself in different forms and different ways, that He has attributes and, again, has none. Only the man who lives under the tree knows that the chameleon can assume various colours and that sometimes it remains colourless. Others, not knowing the whole truth, quarrel among themselves and suffer.

Yes, God has form and, again, He has none. Do you know how it is? Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, is like a shoreless ocean. In the ocean visible blocks of ice are formed here and there by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to speak, of the bhakti of Its worshippers, the Infinite transforms itself into the finite and appears before the worshipper as God with form. That is to say, God reveals Himself to His bhaktas as an embodied Person. Again, as, on the rising of the sun, the ice in the ocean melts away, so on the awakening of jnana, the embodied God melts back into the infinite and formless Brahman.

DOCTOR: Yes. When the sun is up, the ice melts; and what is more, the heat of the sun turns the water into invisible vapour.

MASTER: Yes, that is true. As a result of the discrimination that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory, the aspirant goes into samadhi. Then, for him, the forms or attributes of God disappear altogether. Then he does not feel God to be a Person. Then he cannot describe in words what God is. And who will describe
it? He who is to describe does not exist at all; he no longer finds his 'I'. To such a person Brahman is attributeless. In that state God is experienced only as Consciousness, by man's inmost consciousness. He cannot be comprehended by the mind and intelligence.

Therefore people compare bhakti, love of God, to the cooling light of the moon, and jnana, knowledge, to the burning rays of the sun. I have heard that there are oceans in the extreme north and extreme south where the air is so cold that it freezes the water into huge blocks of ice here and there. Ships cannot move there; they are stopped by the ice.

DOCTOR: Then in the path of bhakti the aspirant meets with obstacles.

MASTER: Yes, that is true. But it does not cause the devotee any harm. After all, it is the water of the Ocean of Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, that is frozen into ice. It will not injure you if you continue to reason, saying, for instance, that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory. This reasoning will awaken in you jnana, which, like the sun, will melt the ice of divine forms back into the infinite Ocean of Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

In the samadhi that comes at the end of reasoning and discrimination, no such thing as 'I' exists. But it is extremely difficult to attain it; 'I-consciousness' lingers so persistently. That is why a man is born again and again in this world.

The cow suffers so much because she says, 'Hamba! Hamba!', that is, 'I! I!' She is yoked to the plough all day long, rain or shine. Or she is slaughtered by the butcher. But even that doesn't put an end to her misery. The cobbler tans her hide to make shoes from it. At last the carder makes a string for his bow from her entrails and uses the string in carding; then it says, 'Tuhu! Tuhu!' that is 'Thou! Thou!' Only then does the cow's suffering come to an end.

Likewise, only when a man says: 'Not I! Not I! I am nobody. O Lord, Thou art the Doer and I am Thy servant; Thou art the Master,' is he freed from all sufferings; only then is he liberated.

Sri V. Anantachari took immense pains in the printing of the Telugu Ramana Gita. When his services were appreciatively referred to in the preface, he pleaded hard with Sri Bhagavan that his name should not be so mentioned. Sri Bhagavan told him, "Why do you worry? To ask for the omission of your name is as much egotism as to desire its inclusion. So let it be. After all, who knows who is Anantachari?"

— Sri Ramana Reminiscences, p.15.
The Search for the Self

By Prof. K. Swaminathan

TAGORE says, "As science is the liberation of our knowledge in the universal reason, which is human reason, religion is the liberation of our individual personality in the universal Person who is human all the same."

Religion in India precedes national awakenings. Shankaracharya was the beginning of a wave that swept round the country, culminating in Chaitanya in Bengal, the Sikh gurus in the Punjab and Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya in the south. Through each of these, a people sprang into a certain realisation, into natural energy and consciousness of their own unity and strength.

Sri Ramakrishna represents a synthesis in one person between all the leaders. It follows that the movements of his age will unify and organise the more provincial fragmentary movements of the past. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is the epitome of the whole. According to Aurobindo, "His was the great super-conscious life which alone can witness the infinitude of the current that bears us all oceanwards. He is the proof of the power behind us, and the future before us. So great a birth initiates great happenings.... the fact that he has been born and lived here in our midst, in the sight and memory of men now living is proof that God hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat." Such an advent is a challenge and a test to all of us.

Arthur Obsorne asserts and we believe that Bhagavan Sri Ramana is a spiritual genius of the order of Buddha, Jesus and Shankara. His presence which though historically connected with Arunachala is equally available to all of us, wherever we are and whoever we are. The sun that shines in Arunachala is the same sun that shines everywhere. Both are in the human heart.

The breakthrough which the astronauts have achieved is that they have seen with their own physical eyes the roundness and smallness of the earth. This vision is of no practical value or use when they return to earth and live among other men in a world which is vast, flat and far from beautiful. And yet the astronauts, having seen our planet as a bright distant orb, can never thereafter be as mean-minded or competitive as the rest of us. Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist who helped invent the atom bomb and who was also a keen student

From a talk by the author at the Ramana Kendra, Delhi (Dec. 1972).
of the Gita, says that infinity extends inward as well as outward.

Questioning within and enquiring 'Who am I?' as per the teaching of Sri Ramana is going beyond the moon of mind to the sun in the heart. That is nightless day. Once you have experienced a few moments of luminous sleep, of wide-awake non-egoistic being, you feel rich, strong, happy and refreshed. We are miserable and helpless because we think the world is so bad and we can do nothing to improve it. But Sri Bhagavan tells us, "First open your own box, examine its contents, count your riches and don't sit there crying, 'I am a pauper, penniless and miserable'." "When you look within and find out who you are, the whole world is in you and you are responsible for it, in an existential sense. You are ready to perish in a good cause, as every woman is in giving birth to a child. You have a sense of wholeness, which is an ever new beginning.

The sun shining on the desert sand makes it hot, the sun shining on the dew drop makes it evaporate, the sun shining on a living leaf makes the tree grow. Exposure to sunlight is the easiest, the most direct and most easily accessible method of growth, but we are afraid thus to expose ourselves because we think we are like the retina of the eye or the sensitised plate. Bhagavan assures us that we are like the living leaf. All that we need is faith in his bonafides and courage to try his method.

*Japa, dhyana* and the like are things we learn from someone or other. But being and being whole is born with us and not acquired. We learn our mother tongue without any effort. But when we learn the letters of the alphabet we use analysis of sounds and a symbol for each sound. We split the whole into many parts. If we forget our mother tongue as our speech and regard it merely as a series of written symbols, we would be committing the stupid mistake of losing our 'preliterate sensibility'. So also if we make too much of names and forms and practical problems and forget our natural being, we would be equally stupid. Poetry, mythology and ritual, along with action, preserve this sensibility.

All the evils of personal and social life come to us because of this forgetfulness of the whole and the stupidity of mistaking the part for the whole, that is, due to the loss of child-like wholeness and integrity.

Instead of saying, 'Give up *kama, krodha* (lust, anger)' — in order to eliminate the acquired habits that divide us — Bhagavan says, "Search within asking 'Who am I?' The new accretions will fall off by themselves." A doctor tells the patient, 'Don't think of the monkey when you drink the medicine.' Another doctor might say, 'Think of the elephant when you drink the medicine.' Is not the second doctor cleverer because his advice is more positive and easier to follow? Sri Bhagavan says, "Seek the Self. Don't worry about lust, anger, greed and other weaknesses. To end all evils, seek the Self which is happiness, beauty and goodness. The ego will vanish.' When thought turns towards the Self, thinking ceases and gives place to pure awareness. Action becomes a mode of being. *Karma* becomes *akarma*. 
If one opens the window, the sunlight rushes in. No effort is needed to go and meet the sunlight or to bring it into the home. One should not sit in fear, trembling and keeping doors and windows shut. In the 'search' for the Self, there is no scope for effort, for there is no one to make the effort. In a moment the ego dies, the Self awakens.

Let us not fix a time-schedule for the attainment of jnana and moksha. Let us remember that our growth is not progress towards, but progress within the sphere of the Infinite.

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The Guru

By Arthur Osborne

To feel, to know, to be the Christ within
Then there is love for God on earth,
Walking as man, seen as man.
Seek not to argue; love has greater worth
   Love makes man kin
With the Beloved. Such have I known
Him of the lustrous eyes, Him whose one look
   Pierced to the heart, where in the seed was sown
Of wisdom deeper than in holy book,
   Of Truth alone
Not to be learned but lived, Truth in its hour
To sprout within the heart's wintry earth
And grow a vibrant thing, then come to power
To slay the seeming self, who gave it birth
   Or to devour.
Heart of my being, seen outwardly as one
In human form, to draw my human love,
Lord Ramana, Guru, the risen sun,
The self made plain, the Guide for all who rove
Lost and alone,
In tangled thoughts and vain imaginings,
Back to the Source, that is radiant smile
Full of compassion for my wanderings,
Tells me I always was, though lost this while
   In a world of things.
Sadasiva Brahmendra:
One with Brahman

By Raman

Sadasiva Brahmendra is the author of some well-known musical compositions which are both short and sweet. They contain authentic expositions of Advaita as well as deeply meaningful hymns in praise of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. These songs reflect his spiritual status. However, a study of his life is as interesting as it is valuable, for any seeker. For, Sadasiva Brahmendra belonged to the highest order of yogis.

He was born the son of Somanatha Yogi and Parvati Devi at Madurai, about the first decade of the 18th century. He was named Sivaramakrishna.

The highly religious parents of Sivaramakrishna underwent severe austerities with the specific object of begetting a worthy son. When they were on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram as part of these austerities, Sri Ramanatha, the presiding deity of the place graciously appeared before the mother in a dream and gave the assurance that her wish would be fulfilled. Such are the special circumstances attendant on the birth of the saint.

1 This is the probable date according to one of the biographies of the saint. This is corroborated in some measure by a historical record relating to Vijaya Raghunatha Thondaman, the ruler of Pudukottai. Sadasiva is reported to have initiated the king in the year 1738 A.D. On the strength of this record we can in general presume that Sadasiva lived during the best part of the 18th Century. Many of the biographies of the saint, however, fail to mention any dates.
Sivaramakrishna was sent to the local patasala (Vedic school) at a tender age and he picked up the lessons at a prodigious rate. Seeing this the teacher was keen that the brilliant student should be enabled to attain higher levels of proficiency. He should rather study under a great master for this purpose; his choice was Sridhara Venkatesa Ayyaval of Tiruvisanallur.

The mother did not give her immediate consent to the proposal; she wanted Sivaramakrishna to wait for some time. It was soon evident why she withheld her consent at first. As he completed his twelfth year she got him married to a girl of her choice, aged five. However Sivaramakrishna never lived a married life. The girl seems to have lived mostly with her parents even after the wedding.

After this Sivaramakrishna was allowed by his mother to go to Tiruvisanallur and commence his studies. Within a very short time he became proficient in the Vedas as well as the sastras. His mastery of the intricacies of religious lore in general was astounding.

The new master Ayyaval then decided to take his student to Paramasivendra, the renowned master, so that he could study Vedanta also. Here too Sivaramakrishna made his mark and earned the admiration of the guru. He had by now achieved complete mastery of the Vedas, Vedanta and sastras — their esoteric meaning included. Apart from this he attained high proficiency in many other subjects also. The training he received from his guru was so elaborate that it had a profound effect on his practice of yoga and influenced him in his work of writing religious treatises as well.

At this juncture the Maharajah of Mysore was on the lookout for a good scholar to adorn his court. His emmissaries came to know about the extraordinary scholarship of Sivaramakrishna, earmarked him for the post and succeeded in their efforts to take him to Mysore, through the intervention of Paramasivendra.

Sivaramakrishna's job as asthana vidvan (chief scholar) of the royal court of Mysore was to examine and assess the academic standard of various scholars who used to visit the court, and also fix the amount of reward or remuneration payable in each case. Since he was a pastmaster who knew the intricacies of several subjects, his examination was very rigorous. The scholars were all easily vanquished and therefore, the remuneration recommended was below expectations in all cases.

A scholar of Thanjavur known as Gopalakrishna Sastry now came to Mysore with the intention of defeating Sivaramakrishna. On seeing him however he became his ardent follower and even did him personal service. He was keen on having darsan of Sivaramakrishna's guru. After obtaining the consent of Sivaramakrishna he went to Paramasivendra's place.²

Sastry gave a glowing account of Sivaramakrishna's extraordinary stature as the state scholar of Mysore. However he felt that his precious time was wasted in scholarly debates and contests; his

² Appears to be Thanjavur, or its environs.
spiritual potential was left unutilised. If Sivaramakrishna could be persuaded to resign his position at the court and advised to take to tapas instead, he would reach great heights in the spiritual realm.

On hearing this sincere plea of Sri Gopalakrishna Sastry, Paramasivendra decided to recall Sivaramakrishna. He adopted a strategem to ensure this. He sent word through Sastry that he wanted to have darsan of Sivaramakrishna! On hearing this the latter sensed that something had gone wrong. For, a guru never seeks the darsan of the disciple. It is always the other way round!

Sivaramakrishna immediately resigned his position at the court and went to the guru. Paramasivendra admonished him by saying, "You have learnt the art of silencing others, but you have not learnt the art of silence yourself." Taking the words of the guru seriously Sivaramakrishna immediately took a vow of silence. He never broke it!

Paramasivendra then initiated Sivaramakrishna into sannyasa and gave him the new name Sadasiva. He further directed him to do tapas at a suitable place which he could choose.

Sadasiva went to Nerur and commenced his sadhana in right earnest. He did tapas and quickly mastered all the five traditional types of yoga known as mantra yoga, parisya yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga and maha yoga.

Mantra yoga is the merger of the mind in the Heart through constant recitation and intense contemplation on Pranava (OM) or other mantras. Parisya Yoga is raising the prana (vital air) from the muladhara chakra (at the base of the spinal cord), to the sahasrara chakra (at the crown of the head), and achieving its dissolution in the light of the Self. Bhava yoga is identification with Brahman through meditation on the Primal Purusha. When one

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1 About 7 miles from Karur.
understands that all this moving and un-
moving universe appearing as earth,
water, fire, air, ether, the sun, moon and
the ego is only the form of the supreme
—and persists in such contemplation
—one achieves success in Bhava yoga.
Abhava yoga is developing the attitude
that God is not different from one's own
self. To dissolve both knowledge and
ignorance and also merge the mind to-
tally in Brahman, or the Self, is maha
yoga. In this state one goes even beyond
the attitude 'I am all'.

Sadasiva’s perfection in all these bran-
ches of yoga took him to the summit of
spiritual attainment. He realised the Self.
Thereafter, he was in a state of complete
and conscious identity with Brahman, or
the Self, without break. He also devel-
oped extraordinary yogic powers.

Drunk with the bliss of Brahman,
Sadasiva was constantly on the move. To-
tally oblivious of even undulations of the
outlying terrain he walked on and on.
Sometimes he would be seen sitting in
contemplation near some bushes. Some-
times he would sit under a tree, or at any
place on the river bank, chosen at ran-
dom. It is said that if he stumbled and
fell down anywhere due to an obstacle
like a stone, he never tried to get up. He
lay like that for days on end.

He thus roamed at will all over —
through plains and forests. His wander-
ings were mainly through the Cauvery
region. He spent much time in Karur,
Thiruvanilavur and Nerur areas, and also
the Amaravathi forests. According to
some accounts he had even crossed the
borders of the country and gone as far as
Turkey.

Such was the wonderful life of this
Self realised sage who never spoke a word
nor wore a shred of dress. The epithet
Brahmendra is usually appended to his
sannyasin name of Sadasiva, to indicate
his perfect state of abidance in Brahma.

Several are the instances in which
Sadasiva’s high yogic powers were re-
vealed. He often used to sit in contem-
plation on a rock known as Agastiamparai
situated in mid river (the Cauvery) at a
point near Kodumudi. This was with a
view to ensuring uninterrupted privacy —
in particular to ward off trouble from
inquisitive and mischievous children.
Once the rising waters swept him off bal-
ance and his whereabouts were unknown.
All search proved futile.

Long after this — that is, during the
dry season — some labourers engaged
in construction work happened to dig
into the river bed (for collecting sand).
They found that the shovel hit some hard
object and there was also copious flow of
blood. Eventually, after careful excava-
tion they found it was Sadasiva, who lay
buried. He was still in contemplation!

Once, in keeping with his usual habit
of roaming at will without any material
purpose in mind, Sadasiva happened to
pass through the zenana (harem) of a
Muslim ruler. Of course he was naked.
The king grew furious at this, unsheathed
his sword and struck at Sadasiva on the
shoulder. One hand was severed
immediately and came down crashing.
There was heavy loss of blood. Sadasiva
however went on walking, thoroughly un-
concerned.

The king was stunned at this and
realised immediately that he had attacked and wounded a truly holy man, without any justification. Overcome by remorse he ran after the saint, prostrated before him and asked his forgiveness. Sadasiva Brahmendra replied in general terms stating that there was neither a sinner nor anyone who was sinned against. There was nothing to be forgiven at all.

But the king persisted in his point that he had committed a sin. Pressed to explain, he related the incident that had just happened and produced the severed hand of Sadasiva. Only then did the latter realise that his hand had been severed! Thereupon he simply held the severed hand to his shoulder; it went back into position as if nothing had happened. The saint then walked away.

The two episodes mentioned would go to prove beyond doubt that Sadasiva Brahmendra was totally absorbed in Brahman, without a trace of body-consciousness.

After the last episode Sadasiva decided to put an end to his wanderings. This was because he thought it probable that people might unintentionally harm him during his sojourns — but incur sin all the same.

He decided to give up the body. With this resolve he reached Nerur and desired to see the Maharajas of Pudukottai, Thanjavur and Mysore. These rulers were his ardent devotees. No message was sent to them but they arrived at Nerur, all the same. Evidently this was due to the sheer power of his thought.

The process by which some yogis discard the body with full consciousness, at a predetermined time, is known as jiva-samadhi. In simple terms, this means that the yogi is buried alive. Sadasiva decided to drop the body in this manner. He apprised the assembled rulers of this decision. They were to construct his samadhi according to the precise instructions given by Tirumular.

On the appointed day Sadasiva Brahmendra entered the samadhi pit. As per his instructions the pit was filled with vibhuti (sacred ash), salt, turmeric powder and brick powder. The samadhi was duly closed. On the ninth day a bilva plant came up over the samadhi. Three days later, that is on the twelfth day, a brahmachari came from Kashi with a Siva linga. Both these events had been predicted by the saint. The Siva Linga was installed at a point twelve feet away from the samadhi.

Puja is being regularly performed at the samadhi. The anniversary of his samadhi day, aradhana, is also being observed regularly since 1912.

It is said that a Muslim devotee at Karachi and a sastry at Manamadurai had fervently prayed to Sadasiva that he should give them darshan at the moment of his discarding the body. Their prayers were answered by Sadasiva and he appeared before them at that moment. The interment ceremony at these two places was also a replica of the one at Nerur. It is further reported that a bilva plant came up at these places (as it did at Nerur).

Long after the samadhi of Sadasiva Brahmendra, Sri Satchidananda Sivabhinava Nrisimha Bharati Swami, the Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sarada Pitam, once desired to have the guidance of the
former in his sadhana. He was certain that he could get such direct guidance from Sadasiva. Accordingly he travelled all the way to Nerur, actually traversing some of the distance on foot.

He spent three days in prayer at the samadhi of Sadasiva Brahmendra. He used to sit at the samadhi after his morning bath. The sitting continued throughout the day. He also abstained from food. On the last day his devout efforts were rewarded. Devotees who were watching from a distance clearly heard a conversation between two persons. One of the voices could be that of Sadasiva only. It is reported that after the Jagadguru got his doubts cleared and returned to Sringeri — with the picture of Sadasiva — he chose a life of seclusion. He nominated Sri Chandrasekara Bharati Swami as the Pontiff of Sringeri, abdicating his position.

Sadasiva Brahmendra was at once a scholar, philosopher, commentator and composer. His commentary on the Brahma Sutras entitled Brahma Sutra Vritti contains the quintessence of Sankara’s commentary (on the Sutras). He wrote commentaries on the Upanishads. He is also the author of Yogasudhakara, a commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. In Atma Vidya Vilasa he describes the greatness of the yogi who has realised the Self. This is to mention only some of the works of Sadasiva. There are many more to his credit. His songs are noted for their easy and elegant diction; they combine harmoniously with the music to produce an enchanting effect.

Sadasiva gave expression to his ecstatic Self-realisation in his songs. One of them is as follows:

All this is Brahman! All this is Brahman!
What is to be said? What is not to be said!
What is to be done? What is not to be done?
What is to be learnt? What is not to be learnt?
What is to be worshipped? What is not to be worshipped?
What is to be known? What is not to be known?
What is to be enjoyed? What is not to be enjoyed?

One should meditate everywhere and at all times on the Hamsa (the mantra ‘I am He’) which assures liberation.

He describes the state of the Self-realised one in his Atma Vidya Vilasa:

Realising within that all this universe is unsubstantial, free from pride, envy and self esteem, he (the Self-realised one) roams about without any restrictions.

The king of ascetics who is awake in the state of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss rests on a soft bed of sand; this is located in a lonely place where there is a cluster of plants and trees.

Such was the life of this extraordinary yogi. Some of the great yogis resemble children and mad men in so far as their external actions are concerned. Sadasiva was one such. But inwardly, like the great yogis of ancient times, he was one with Brahman.
Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj visit Bhagavan.
18 August 1936 (details overleaf)
16 August 1939 (photograph on previous page)
one else. The question of superiority is so swiftly settled if one sticks to the Self! There is no doubt that the multi-religious confusion is straightened out if we turn to Bhagavan.

Apart from inter-religious problems, there are intra-religious problems too. Religion in theory, whether it is theology, cosmology or metaphysics, could cause confusion not only to the beginner but also to the advanced seeker. The reason is that contradictory conclusions are reached by theory. The reality of the world is asserted by some; it is vehemently challenged by others. A mass of theory is there, only to get one in a tangle. The problem is: which theory is correct? Or even for practice, which path is most efficacious — karma, bhakti, yoga or jnana? The deeper we delve into theory, the more we flounder in doubts. Not unoften, dissatisfaction at the whole thing is the result. Theories are, like Gratiano’s reasons, “as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them and when you have them, they are not worth the search.”

But then Sri Ramana does not bind you to any theory; so no theoretical doubt will ever assail his followers. No theory is required to tell that one exists. The search into the one existing Self will keep away searches or researches outside the Self. Even as a start, this liberation from theory (for liberation from samsara!) is a great thing.

Apart from these questions, there is the fundamental one: What proof can you adduce for the existence of God, or the validity of religion? In the modern age religion should satisfy and convince; it cannot afford to assert and demand belief. The confrontation with materialistic fancies or the scientific method is no mean problem.

Science can offer spectacular proof of its theories. Technology can give practical means of comfortable living. One cannot ignore the mental satisfaction and material comfort offered by science and its offshoot, technology. The value and impact of the scientific method demand recognition. It is obvious that religion must evolve and offer its own method of experimentation utterly detached from dogma.

Just such an experimental method is

2 Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Act I — Scene I.
provided in Self-enquiry. It is the most intense and intensely personal spiritual experimentation. One doesn't have to believe in anything except oneself. Even if someone believes that nothing exists, he still admits by implication that he exists. If non-existence were the truth, to whom should one tell it, except oneself? If you cling to the Self, all else will be transcended; the Self exists all through. Thus the method does away with the necessity for belief.

Thus, though the goal reached is that of all religions, Sri Ramana's appeal is not in the name of religion. The removal of the label from religion is a great service. What is required is no formal adherence to any dogma but an intense and sincere effort to search and find Truth. If this is done, we shall see the end of what Robert Burns condemns as

"Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!"

Bhagavan reveals the Truth in all its purity. He has given the master key to the vast treasures of the spiritual world which everyone is free to discover and enjoy.

A Shakespearian Sonnet

When death itself dies

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fool'd by those rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on Death that feeds on men,
And Death, once dead, there's no more dying then.
Selections from the *Dhammapada*

1. Vigilance is the abode of eternal life, thoughtlessness is the abode of death. Those who are vigilant (who are given to reflection) do not die. The thoughtless are as if dead already. (II.1)

2. Just as a fletcher makes straight his arrow, the wise man makes straight his trembling, unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard and difficult to hold back (restrain). (III.1)

3. They who will restrain their thought, which travels far, alone, incorporeal, seated in the cave (of the heart), will be freed from the fetters of death. (III.5)

4. Not a mother, not a father, nor any other relative will do so much; a well-directed mind will do us greater service. (III.11)

5. The fool is tormented thinking 'these sons belong to me', 'this wealth belongs to me'. He himself does not belong to himself. How then can sons be his? How can wealth be his? (V.3)

6. As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, so wise men are not moved amidst blame and praise. (VI.6)

7. He who, for his own sake or for the sake of another, does not wish for a son or wealth or a kingdom, if he does not wish for his own prosperity by unfair means he certainly is virtuous, wise, and religious. (VI.9)

8. Those whose minds are well grounded in the (seven) elements of enlightenment, who, without clinging to anything rejoice in freedom from attachment, whose appetites have been conquered, who are full of light, attain *nirvana* in this world. (VI.14)

9. That place is delightful where saints dwell, whether in the village or in the forest, in deep water or on dry land. (VII.9)

10. If a man were to conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and another conquer one, himself, he indeed is the greatest of conquerors. (VIII.4)

11. Think not lightly of good (saying that 'it will not come near me'. Even a water-pot is filled by the falling of drops of water. A wise man becomes full of goodness even if he gathers it little by little. (IX.7)

12. All men tremble at punishment: all men love life. Likening others to oneself one should neither slay nor cause to slay. (X.2)

13. Not nakedness, not matted hair, not dirt (literally mud), not fasting, not lying on the ground, not rubbing with ashes (literally dust), not sitting motionless purify a mor-

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The *Dhammapada* is an anthology of passages from the Buddhist canon, embodying the spirit of Buddha's teaching. The selections are from Dr. Radhakrishnan's translation of the Pali original.
14. Like a well-trained horse when touched by a whip, be strenuous and swift and you will, by faith, by virtue, by energy, by meditation, by discernment of the law, put aside this great sorrow (of earthly existence), endowed with knowledge and (good) behaviour and mindfulness. (X.16)

15. The self is the lord of self; who else could be the lord? With self well subdued a man finds a lord who is difficult to obtain. (XII.4)

16. By oneself, indeed, is evil done; by oneself is one injured. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself. No one purifies another. (XII.9)

17. Look upon the world as a bubble: look upon it as a mirage. Him who looks thus upon the world the king of death does not see. (XIII.4)

18. He who formerly was thoughtless and afterwards became reflective (sober) lights up this world like the moon when freed from a cloud. (XIII.6)

19. Even the gods emulate those wise men who are given to meditation, who delight in the peace of emancipation (from desire) the enlightened, the thoughtful. (XIV.5)

20. There is no satisfaction of one's passions even by a shower of gold pieces. He who knows that 'passions are of small enjoyment and productive of pain' is a wise man. (XIV.8)

21. Even in celestial pleasures he finds no delight. The disciple who is fully awakened delights only in the destruction of all desires. (XIV.9)

22. Men driven by fear go to many a refuge, to mountains, and to forests, to sacred trees, and shrines. (XIV.10)

23. That, verily, is not a safe refuge, that is not the best refuge. After having got to that refuge a man is not delivered from all pains. (XIV.11)

24. But he who takes refuge in the Buddha, the Law and the Order, he perceives, in his clear wisdom, the four noble truths. (XIV.12)

25. Let us live happily then, hating none in the midst of men who hate. Let us dwell free from hate among men who hate. (XV.1)

26. There is no fire like passion, no ill like hatred, there is no sorrow like this physical existence
27. Health is the greatest of gifts, contentment is the greatest wealth; trust is the best of relationships. *Nirvana* is the highest happiness. (XV.6)

28. Therefore, do not take a liking to anything; loss of the loved object is evil. There are no bonds for him who has neither likes nor dislikes. (XVI.3)

29. Let a man put away anger, let him renounce pride. Let him get beyond all worldly attachments; no sufferings befall him who is not attached to name and form (phenomenal existence), who calls nothing his own. (XVII.1)

30. He who curbs his rising anger like a chariot gone astray (over the plain), him I call a real charioteer, others but hold the reins (and do not deserve to be called charioteers). (XVIII.2)

31. Let a man overcome anger by non-anger (gentleness), let him overcome evil by good, let him overcome the miser by liberality, let him overcome the liar by truth. (XVII.3)

32. Those who are ever vigilant (wakeful), who study by day and by night, who strive after *nirvana*, their taints come to an end. (XVII.8)

33. There never was, nor will be, nor is there now to be found anyone who is (wholly) blamed, anyone who is (wholly) praised. (XVII.8)

34. As a smith removes the impurities of silver, even so let a wise man remove the impurities of himself one by one, little by little, and from time to time. (XVIII.5)

35. But there is an impurity greater than all impurities. Ignorance is the greatest impurity. O mendicants, having cast away that impurity, be free from all impurities. (XVIII.9)

36. There is no path in the sky, there is no recluse outside (of us). Nothing in the phenomenal world is eternal, there is no instability to the awakened. (XVIII.21)

37. A man is not learned simply because he talks much. He who is tranquil, free from hatred, free from fear, he is said to be learned. (XIX.3)

38. He in whom dwell truth, virtue, non-violence, restraint, control, he who is free from impurity and is wise, he is called an elder. (XIX.6)

39. He is not a mendicant simply because he begs others (for alms). He who adopts the whole law is a mendicant, not he who adopts only a part. (XIX.11)

40. 'All created things are impermanent (transitory).’ When one by wisdom realizes (this), he needs not (is superior to) (this world of) sorrow, this is the path to purity. (XX.5)

41. The sun shines by day, the moon lights up the night, the warrior shines in his armour, the Brahmin shines in his meditation, but the awakened shines all day and night by his radiance (of spirit). (XXVI.5)
The Song Celestial

(F.T. Brooks' translation)

During his visit to the Ashram in 1937, Mr. Thomas, Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford expressed a desire to know which of the English translations of the Gita was the best. Sri Bhagavan mentioned that of F.T. Brooks.

Sri Bhagavan has also selected 42 verses from the Gita and arranged them in appropriate order for the guidance of devotees. These verses contain the quintessence of the Gita. We publish for the first time F.T. Brooks' translation of these verses, known as The Song Celestial.

Sanjaya continued:

1. To HIM with pity thus transfixed, 
whelmed in despair, his smarting eyes 
Full to the brim with unshed tears, 
Madhusudana spoke these words:

The Blessed One said:

2. The 'Field', O Kunti's son, is but another term for this thy Form. 
The Being who [within] surveys 
is called Field-know'r by them that know.

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1 Talk No. 433, Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi. p. 400 (1994 Edn.).
3. Know ME besides, O Bharata,
as Arch-Field Know'r in every 'Field'.
Who both Field-Knower Knows, and Field,
has Knowledge true, thus I believe. (XIII.2)

4. The SELF am I, O Lord of Sleep,
in every creature's Heart enshrined:
The Rise and Noon of every form,
I am its final Doom as well. (X.20)

5. For certain death e'er dogs the 'born',
and certain birth e'er dogs the 'dead',
Hence about that which none escapes,
it is not fit that thou shouldst grieve. (II.27)

6. Birth chains Him not, hence no 'death' can remove Him:
No dawn brought Him forth, hence no setting can hide.
Unborn, unchanging, eternal, primeval,
He perishes not, though His body be slain. (II.20)

7. Safe from wound, He, safe from fire, He,
Safe from moisture and drought alike,
Constant, all-pervading, fixed,
past all motion, He, eternal. (II.24)

8. As Deathless truly THAT know thou
whereby this all in Space is spread.
The death of that unchanging ONE
can by no one be brought to pass. (II.17)

9. The 'NO' has nowhere room to be;
no void is, where the 'YES' is not:— [sic]
This final end of both is seen
by Them that see things as they are. (II.16)

10. As all-pervading Space remains
for very subtleness unstained,
So, present in His Form throughout.
the SELF of Man incurs no stain. (XIII.32)
11. That STATE to light it needs no sun; no moon shines there, nor fire burns. Once they've come there, they ne'er 'return'.
That is My HOME beyond this all. (XV.6)

12. Th' 'Indissoluble Undefined'
Its Name — 't is called the Final Goal, Which reached, they come not 'back' again, That is my HOME beyond this All. (VIII.21)

13. Past error and pride, viscous mind-stains washed out, At-One with ALL SELF, all heart's longings turned back, Set free from all 'pairs' such as pleasure and pain, They come, glamour-proof, to that STATE beyond change. (XV.5)

14. Who, scorning word of Holy Writ, will live as selfish fancy bids, Secures nor true success, nor joy, still less the final Goal of MAN. (XVI.23)

15. The SAME within all creatures' Hearts, their ever-standing LORD Supreme, 'Mid all destruction undestroyed, — whoso thus sees, he sees indeed. (XIII.27)

16. But by whole-hearted self-surrender My Devotee can ever thus See ME, and know ME as I am, and merge in ME, Parantapa. (XI.54)

17. The faith of every man depends on what he feels himself to be. Faith-wrought is man, O Bharata, — whate'er his faith, the same is he. (XVII.3)

18. The faithful, heart-whole Devotee, sense held by will, finds WISDOM His. Once wisdom has been found [within], He swiftly wins to Final Peace. (IV.39)
19. To these, who dwell at-One for aye,
who worship ME for Love alone.
I give that Pow'r of single Will
by which They make their Way to ME. (X.10)

20. For them out of Compassion pure,
I, shrined within their Nature's core,
Dispel the gloom of nescience sprung:
SELF-KNOWLEDGE, My resplendent Lamp. (X.11)

21. Now, as to Those in whom Knowledge
has scattered this nescience of SELF,
Sunlike, in Them It discloses
that PRESENCE transcendent, revealed. (V.16)

22. Man's sense-pow'rs are subtle, they say;
but subtler than these is his mind;
Man's spirit is subtler than mind;—
yet subtler than spirit is HE. (III.42)

23. To subtler than spirit awake,
firm-poising thyself on That SELF,
Destroy, O Long Armed One, thy Foe,
desire-bodied, baffling all grasp. (III.43)

24. As kindled flame to ashes bright
the darkest fuel soon transforms,
This WISDOM-FIRE, [in Heart's Cave lit,]
transmutes all deeds to 'ashes' pure. (IV.37)

25. In all His undertakings, free
from any prompting of desire,
His deeds burnt pure in Wisdom-Fire, —
a Knower do the Wise call him. (IV.19)

26. To those who know Themselves, unyoked
from lust and anger, mind-controlled,
Heart mastered, Final Rest in BRAHM
of Its own Self is drawing nigh. (V.26)
27. By slow approaches let him come
to Rest, with patient, Rock-poised Will,
His Mind at home in Selfhood pure,
let him create no thought at all. (VI.25)

28. Though o’er and o’er the fickle mind,
all restlessness, a-wandering goes,
Still o’er and o’er let him regain
control, and poise it back in Self. (VI.26)

29. Sense-pow’rs, Mind, Will, all merged [in SELF],
of Thought deep-hushed, on Freedom bent,
The Man e’er loosed from wish, fear, wrath, —
that MAN, O Friend, in Truth is free. (V.28)

30. His own SELF shrined in all that lives,
all creatures shrined within HIMSELF, —
Thus sees the Man in Poise at-One,
with Eye of Sameness viewing all. (VI.29)

31. But they who, cleansed of ‘other’-ness,
where’er they turn, see ME hail ME,
At-One for aye in ME are they:
I gain for them, I hold for them. (IX.22)

32. Of these the Wise, for’er at-One,
devoted to the One, excels.
I to the Wise am passing dear,
and He is not less dear to ME. (VII.17)

33. Rare fruitage of unnumbered births,
the Man of Wisdom comes to ME.
“VASUDEVA IS ALL” says He,
the Great Soul, hard to find on earth. (VII.19)

34. When a man casts forth, O Partha,
all desires in mind inwoven,
With Self alone content in SELF, —
a Will-poised Man is He than called. (II.55)
35. Unwrapping from him all desires, 
whose labours, free from longing, 
Free from ‘my’-ness, free from ‘I’-ness, —
unto Peace does that Man attain. (II.71)

36. The man from whom the world shrinks not, 
who from the world in turn shrinks not, 
In whom joy, anger, fear, no more 
run riot, — He is dear to ME. (XII.15)

37. With equal heart in fame and shame, 
with equal mind to friend and foe, 
Detached from all He undertakes, —
‘Past Moods Arisen’, He is called. (XIV.25)

38. On the other hand, the Man who joys 
in SELF alone, delights in SELF, 
Is utterly content in SELF,—
for Such there’s naught that He need do. (III.17)

39. No personal concern has He 
in aught that’s done or left undone: 
No vested interests to be 
imperilled ’mid all things create. (III.18)

40. Content with what befalls unsought, 
all contrast bridging, envy free, 
In triumph as in failure, poised, — 
the deed, though done, cannot bind him. (IV.22)

41. The LORD, at Rest within the heart 
of every thing create, abides; 
And whirls all creatures round and round, 
by glamour on His wheel held fast. (XVIII.61)

42. To HIM do thou for shelter fly 
with thy whole being (Bharata)!
His Grace shall bear thee safe across 
to His eternal, changeless STATE. (XVIII.62)
ORTY years have passed since I walked into his abode and saw the Maharshi half-reclining, half-sitting on a tigerskin-covered couch. After such a long period most memories of the past become somewhat faded, if they do not lose their existence altogether. But I can truthfully declare that, in his case, nothing of the kind has happened. On the contrary, his face, expression, figure and surroundings are as vivid now as they were then. What is even more important to me is that — at least during my daily periods of meditation — the feeling of his radiant presence is as actual and as immediate today as it was on that first day.

So powerful an impression could not have been made, nor continued through the numerous vicissitudes of an incarnation which has taken me around the world, if the Maharshi had been an ordinary yogi — much less an ordinary man. I have met dozens of yogis, in their Eastern and Western varieties, and many exceptional persons. Whatever status is assigned to him by his followers, or whatever indifference is shown to him by others, my own position is independent and unbiased. It is based upon our private talks in those early days when such things were still possible, before fame brought crowds; upon observations of, and conversations with, those who were around him; upon my his historical record; and finally upon my own personal experiences, whatever they are worth.

Upon all this evidence one fact is incontrovertibly clear — that he was a pure channel for a Higher Power.

This capacity of his to put his own self-consciousness aside and to let himself be suffused by this Power, is not to be confounded with what is commonly called, in the west, spiritualistic mediumship. For no spirit of a departed person ever spoke through him: on the contrary, the silence which fell upon us at such times was both extraordinary and exquisite. No physical phenomena of an occult kind was ever witnessed then; nothing at all happened outwardly. But those who were not steeped too far in materialism to recognise what was happening within him and within themselves at the time, or those who were not congealed too stiffly in suspicion or criticism to be passive and sensitive intuitively, felt a distinct and strange change in the mental atmosphere. It was uplifting and in-

spiring: for the time being it pushed
them out of their little selves, even if
only partially.

This change came every day and mostly
during the evening periods when the
Maharshi fell into a deep contemplation.
No one dared to speak then and all con­
versations were brought to an end. A
grave sacredness permeated the entire
scene and evoked homage, reverence,
even awe. But before the sun's depar­
ture brought about this remarkable trans­
formation, and for most of the day, the
Maharshi behaved, ate and spoke like a
perfectly normal human being.

That there was some kind of a
participation in a worldless divine play
during those evenings — each to the
extent of his own response — was the
feeling with which some of us arose when
it all ended. That the Maharshi was the
principal actor was true enough on the
visible plane. But there was something
more ......

In his own teaching Shri Ramana
Maharshi often quoted, whether in
association or confirmation, the writings
of the first Shankara Acharya, who lived
more than a thousand years ago. He
considered them unquestionably authori­
tative. He even translated some of them
from one Indian language to another.

In the temple of Chingleput I inter­
viewed His Holiness the Shankara
Acharya of Kamakoti Peetam, a linear
successor of the first Guru. When the
meeting was concluded but before I left,
I took the chance to ask a personal ques­
tion. A disciple of the Maharshi had come
to me and wanted to take me to his Guru.

None of those I asked could tell me any­
thing about him, nor had even heard of
him. I was undecided whether to make
the journey or not.

His Holiness immediately urged me
to go, and promised satisfaction. He is
still alive and still active in the religious
world of Southern India. In my humble
belief, he embodies the same high quality
of consciousness which the Maharshi did.
This belief is shared by Professor T.M.P.
Mahadevan, who was present as an eight­
teen year old student during my first
meeting with the Maharshi, and who has
ever since remained a devotee. He is now
Head of the Department of Philosophy
at the University of Madras.

Sometimes, as I looked at the figure
on the couch, I wondered if he would
ever come to England. If so, how would
he be dressed, how would he behave in
those teeming London streets, how eat,
live and work? But he was uninterested
in travelling and so he never came, not
in the physical body; what did come was
his spirit and mind, which have awak­
ened sufficient interest among the
English to make this meeting possible.

Again and again he gave us this
teaching, that the real Maharashi was
not the body which people saw; it was
the inner being. Those who never made
the journey to India during his lifetime
may take comfort in this thought: that it
is possible to invoke his presence wher­
ever they are, and to feel its reality in the
heart.

1 His Holiness attained maha samadhi in 1994.
2 Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan has since passed away.
Mystic Poetry in English: Contribution of Edwin Arnold

By Alan Jacobs

The illustrious name of Sir Edwin Arnold is almost forgotten by readers of English poetry in the West. Many of the great Victorians are 'out of fashion' because of today's strong modernistic trends. This position is slowly changing and many of the great figures of the past, such as Christina Rossetti, are being reappraised. Paradoxically he is better known in Asia where even today Buddhist school children learn by heart portions from the Light of Asia, as part of their religious education. In India his monumental translation of the Bhagavad Gita into English blank verse (the metre of Shakespeare and Milton) has never been out of print since it was first published as the Song Celestial in 1885.

His epic poem, the Light of Asia, a life of the Buddha based on the Sanskrit Lalita Vistara, was published in 1879 and was one of the best-selling volumes of poetry in the Victorian era in Britain, Asia and America. His subsequent work, Light of the World based on the life of Christ, proved a failure in spite of its being startlingly brilliant and innovative. He narrowly missed being appointed as Poet Laureate. He was overlooked apparently because of his heterodoxy and Oriental leanings.
India was his great love — 'as dear as to England, she is to me',
as he put it. As a youth, after achieving First Class Honours in the
classics at Oxford, he was appointed India correspondent for the Daily
Telegraph. In India his talents were recognised and he became
He mastered Sanskrit and used his poetic gifts to translate the first
three vallis of the Katha Upanishad (under the title The Secret of Death)
and the Mandukya Upanishad (under the title In an Indian Temple). He
then translated the spiritually erotic Gita Govinda, the Bhagavad Gita,
the Hitopadesa and sections of the Mahabharata. But it is his sublime
translation of the Gita which will ensure his place in history.

The following extract is from Arnold's translation of the third
Valli of the Katha Upanishad. It is in praise of the Purusha. The phrase
'the road is narrow as a knife-edge' inspired Somerest Maugham to call
his novel of spiritual search, The Razor's Edge:

Listen! the things of sense are more than sense!
The mind is higher still! the moving will
Higher than mind! the Spirit higher yet!
And higher than the Spirit is the soul,
Highest of all the all-embracing ONE,
PURUSH! Over, or beyond, is naught:-
Innermost, Utmost, Infinite, is This!
This is that Ultimate and Uttermost
Which shall not be beheld, being in all
The unbeholden essence! Not the less
Will it reveal itself by subtle light
Of insight, straitly seeking hidden truth!

If one will see it, let him rule the flesh
By mind, governing mind with ordered Will
Subduing Will by Knowledge, making this
Serve the firm Spirit, and the Spirit cling
As Soul to the Eternal Changeless Soul:
So shall he see!

UTTISHTATA! — Rise! Awake!
Seek the great Teachers, and attend! The road
Is narrow as a knife-edge! hard to tread!
But whoso once perceiveth HIM that IS; —
Without a name, Unseen, Impalpable,
Bodiless, Undiminished, Unenlarged,
To senses Undeclared, without an end,
Without beginning, Timeless, Higher than height,
Deeper than depth! Lo! such an one is saved!
Death hath not power upon him!

Arnold’s translation ends with the following passage:

Ye who read,
And ye who hear, these never dying words
Which Nachiketas won, and Death vocuousafed,
Rejoice! for ye are loved in Brahma’s world!
Whoso — pure-hearted — the deep lore of this
Expoundeth, in th’ assembly, or at time
of Srardha (let it otherwise be hid)!
Thereby obtaineth endless fruit of bliss,
Yea! endless fruit of bliss!

The passage which follows describes how the earth rejoiced at
the enlightenment of the Buddha. It is from Book I of the Light of Asia:

Lo! the Dawn
Sprang with Buddh’s victory! lo! in the East
Flamed the first fires of beauteous day, poured forth
Through fleeting folds of Night’s black drapery.
High in the widening blue the herald-star
Faded to paler silver as there shot
Brighter and brightest bars of rosy gleam
Across the grey. Far off the shadowy hills
Saw the great sun, Before the world was ’ware
And donned their crowns of crimson; flower by flower

and Devas in the air
Cried ‘It is finished, finished!’ and the priests
Stood with the wondering people in the streets
Watching those golden splendours flood the sky,
And saying ‘There hath happed some mighty thing’.

Then he arose — radiant, rejoicing, strong —
Beneath the Tree, and lifting high his voice
Spake this, in hearing of all Times and Worlds:

MANY A HOUSE OF LIFE
HATH HELD ME — SEEKING EVER HIM WHO WROUGHT
THESE PRISONS OF THE SENSES, SORROW-FRAUGHT;
SORE WAS MY CEASELESS STRIFE!
BUT NOW,
THOU BUILDER OF THIS TABERNACLE — THOU!
I KNOW THEE! NEVER SHALT THOU BUILD AGAIN
THOSE WALLS OF PAIN,
NOR RAISE THE ROOF-TREE OF DECEITS, NOR LAY
FRESH RAFTERS ON THE CLAY;
BROKEN THY HOUSE IS, AND THE RIDGE POLE SPLIT!
DELUSION FASHIONED IT!
SAFE PASS I THENCE — DELIVERANCE TO OBTAIN.

This episode containing the description of Buddha's Self Realisation closing with his own statement on his Realisation was not merely a delightful piece of poetry but a literal eye-opener on the wisdom of the East. It was on the coffee tables of the Victorian middle class in England.

Arnold's *In an Indian Temple* is a translation of the *Mandukya Upanishad*. The poem was written as a dialogue between an English sahib and a Hindu Pandit. There is also a temple dancing girl who later joins the discussion. In this section the Pandit explains how the fourth state (of consciousness) holds all the three letters A, U and M of OM. This has been referred to by Sri Bhagavan in *Self Enquiry*.

**Pandit:** I read on from Mandukya: — the Fourth
Is that which holdeth all the three; being Life
Past living, sleeping, dreaming, dying — OM!
He who is there is Brahman, knowing all—
Not as we know, peeping inside and out,—
Not as we understand. 'Wise' or 'unwise'
Are words without a meaning for the Soul
Lifted to high. It seeth, all unseen;
Perceiveth, unperceived; not understood,
It comprehendeth; never to be named,
Never made palpable; not limited;
The testimony of it being Itself,
Itself made one with ONE SOUL, wherein
Those states are each transcended and absorbed,
Changeless, rejoicing, passionless, pervading!
And this eternal Soul of life, the Self,
Is named in naming OM, and OM is named
From those three matras, A and U and M.
A is Vaisvanara, the Waking-State;
And U is Taijasa, the State of Dreams;
And M is Prajna, sleep deeper than dream.
Where the soul wakes, and moves in larger light,
Knowing a farther knowledge; growing one
With HIM WHO IS!

Arnold called the *Gita Govinda* the Indian song of songs. This is a popular erotic poem on the divine love of Krishna and Radha, by Jayadeva. Arnold knew this poem was really full of bridal mysticism; it was in the category of works like the Song of Solomon. Therefore he never descended into banality while doing his translation (like other translators). This work is still popular. In this section Krishna eloquently sings of his love for the beloved:

Or only speak once more, for though thou slay me,
   Thy heavenly mouth must move, and I shall hear
Dulcet delights of perfect music sway me
   Again — again that voice so blest and dear;
Sweet Judge! the prisoner prayeth for his doom
   That he may hear his fate divinely come.

Speak once more! then thou canst not choose but show
   Thy mouth's unparalleled and honeyed wonder
Where, like pearls hid in red-lipped shells, the row
   Of pearly teeth thy rose-red lips lie under;
Ah me! I am that bird that woos the moon,
   And pipes — poor fool! to make it glitter soon.

Splendour of love, in whose sweet light
   Darkness is past and nought;
Ah, beyond words that sound on earth,
   Golden bloom of the garden of heaven!
Radha, enchantress! Radha the queen!
   Be this trespass forgiven—
In that I dare, with courage too much
   And a heart afraid, — so bold it is grown —
To hold thy hand with a bridegrooms's touch,
   And take thee for mine, mine own.

Arnold's translation of the Gita is a masterpiece capturing for English readers the true spirit of the divine scripture. He felt the poetic flavour of the Sanskrit original was lost in many of the translations in prose. The extract below is from the closing section of the *Gita* and contains great statements on the spiritual path:

In thy thoughts
   Do all thou dost for Me! Renounce for Me!
Sacrifice heart and mind and will to Me!
Live in the faith of Me! In faith of Me
All dangers thou shalt vanquish, by My grace;
But, trusting to thyself and heeding not,
Thou can'st but perish! If this day thou say'st,
Relying on thyself, 'I will not fight!'
Vain will the purpose prove! thy qualities
Would spur thee to the war. What thou dost shun,
Misled by fair illusions, thou wouldst seek
Against thy will, when the task comes to thee
Waking the promptings in thy nature set.
There lives a Master in the hearts of men
Maketh their deeds, by subtle pulling-strings,
Dance to what tune HE will. With all thy soul
Trust Him, and take Him for thy succour, Prince!
So— only so, Arjuna! — shalt thou gain—
By grace of Him—the uttermost repose,
The Eternal Place!

What follows is from Chapter 10 of the *Gita*. Arnold comes out
with his best in translating this eulogy by Arjuna on seeing the true
divine nature of Krishna:

What Thou hast said now know I to be truth.
O Kesava! that neither gods nor men
Nor demons comprehend Thy mystery
Made manifest, Divinest! Thou Thyself
Thyself alone dost know, Maker Supreme!
Master of all the living! Lord of Gods!
King of the Universe! to Thee alone
Belongs to tell the heavenly excellence
Of those perfections wherewith Thou dost fill
These worlds of Thine; Pervading, Immanent!
How shall I learn, Supremest Mystery!
To know Thee, though I muse continually?
Under what form of Thine unnumbered forms
Mysth Thou be grasped? Ah! yet again recount,
Clear and complete, Thy great appearances,
The secrets of Thy Majesty and Might,
Thou High Delight of Men! Never enough
Can mine ears drink the Amrit of such words!

The beautiful passage that follows is from Arnold's *The Light of
the World*. Mary Magdalene tells after the crucifixion, the three Magi
MYSTIC POETRY IN ENGLISH: CONTRIBUTION OF EDWIN ARNOLD

who re-visit her, of the glories of Jesus. This illustrates Arnold's truly religious soul and love of his own Christianity:

And Heaven, whate'er betide,
Spreads surely somewhere, on Death's farther side!
This sphere obscure, viewed with dim eyes to match,
This earthly span — gross, brief — wherein we snatch,
Rarely and faintly, glimpses of Times past
Which have been boundless, and of Times to last
Beyond them timelessly, how should such be
All to be seen, all we were made to see?
This flesh fallacious, binding us, indeed,
To sense, and yet so largely leaving freed
That we do know things are we cannot know,
And high and higher on Thought's stairways go
Till each last round leads to some sudden steep
Where Reason swims, and falters; or must leap
Headlong, perforce, into the Infinite,
How should we say outside this shines no light.

Arnold states that the birth of Christ marks a series of revelations from God for humanity to burst the veil. He felt strongly that the Divine Mercy periodically sent messengers such as Christ and Buddha to the planet to lift humanity from the dust:

Of lovelier sense unseen; of lives which spread
Pleasant and unexpected for the Dead,
As our world, opening to the Babe's wide eyes
New from the Womb, and full of birth's surprise?
How should this prove the All, the Last, the First?
Why shall no inner, under, splendours burst
Once — twice — the Veil? Why quite deny
The Heavenly story, lest our doubtful hearts—
Which mark the stars, and take them for bright parts
Of golden spear beam. Oh, a dream, belike!
Some far-fetched Vision, new to peasant's sleep
Of Paradise stripped bare! — But, why thus keep
Secrets for them? This bar, which doth enclose
Better and nobler souls, why burst for those
Who supped on the parched pulse, and lapped the stream,
And each, at the same hour, dreams the same dream!

Of boundless Being, ships of life that sail
In glittering argosies, without a tale,
Without a term— or, of that shoreless Sea,
The scattered silver Islets, drifting free
To destinies unmeasured— see, too, there
By help of dead believing eyes, which were,
The peoples of the stars; and listen, meek,
To those vast voices of the stars, which speak—
If ever they shall speak— in each man's tongue?

Arnold also translated from Islam poems of Sadi and the 99 Beautiful names of Allah. So his religious interest was all embracing. As the successful editor of the Daily Telegraph he was a man of action and financed Stanley's historic expedition to find Livingstone in Africa. He also raised funds for the restoration of the then neglected site at Buddha Gaya.

Sir Edwin was not only a master translator, versifier and mystic who met many sages in India, but an original poet in his own right. His Light of the World, a forgotten Christian masterpiece awaits to be unveiled to the contemporary world.

BREAKING COCONUTS

Offering a coconut and breaking it before an idol is a time-honoured custom widely observed. Lakshmi Ammal of Tiruchuli who was a playmate of Bhagavan in his boyhood says once stood before him and was struggling to tear the fibres from a coconut so that it could be broken.

Sri Bhagavan asked her what she was doing. She said, "It is Vijayadasami day and I thought it good to break a coconut before Bhagavan."

He took the nut from her hands, cleared it of the fibre and broke it before himself, while Lakshmi Ammal stood helplessly watching, and amused. One must visualise the scene to appreciate the humour. There is food for thought also.
Wordsworth’s *Tintern Abbey*

By N.R.S. Manian

*TINTERN Abbey*, situated in Monmouthshire, South West England, is a ruined abbey church founded in the earlier part of the twelfth century for Cistercian monks who came from France. It is well known for the beauty of its proportions and graceful architectural detail. It is equally well known for the beauty of its setting on the banks of the river Wye.

The poem is a sequel to the second visit of the poet to the region in 1798, the first one being in 1793. He recalls his first visit and also makes a comparison between his feelings for nature on these two occasions, separated by a span of five years.

Wordsworth’s rapturous adoration of nature is in evidence here — to a degree even greater than in other poems of his (with the exception of the *Immortality Ode*). The extraordinary beauty of the diction leaves us in wonder.

Since there is no mention of the abbey anywhere in the poem one may be justified in saying that it has nothing to do with the abbey, or rather, that the title is misleading. However one should remember that the abbey provides a useful means of identifying the landscape which inspired the poet to come out with the poem.
In regard to depth of ideas and the beauty of language the *Immortality Ode* and *Tintern Abbey* have much in common — they are at the same high level. In fact, the two can be regarded as complementary to each other. For these reasons many critics are of the opinion that they are the most outstanding among Wordsworth's poems.

Wordsworth describes the beauty of the scenery before him with the clear recollection that he has seen it all before, during his earlier visit:

The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage ground, these orchard tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; ..... ..... 

The passage that follows amounts to a confession that the poet was in a state of mind in earlier years in which his appreciation of the charms of nature was of a primitive kind, lacking refinement:

Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came along these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o' er the mountains by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever Nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all — I cannot paint
What then I was ..... ..... 

With the passing of years and growing maturity, encounter with nature yields more meaningful lessons:

...... ..... For I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:

A motion and a spirit, that implies
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. .... ....
The scenes of nature when viewed in retrospect fill the mind with great joy:

But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;

Nature acts not only as the consoler but the counsellor as well.

It helps unravel the mystery of life:

To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen\(^1\) of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened — that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

Wordsworth has full faith in the beneficience of nature:

Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; it's her privilege
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. .... ....

Nature excites the purest thoughts in man. He thereby discovers the essence and core of his moral being:

\(^1\) Archaic variant of burden.
... well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

A study of the poem is highly rewarding. The unity of man and nature as revealed to him by direct, intense experience is conveyed by the poet as far as it could be done through the medium of words.

Teacher and Pupil

When Bhagavan was living on the hill-side, his old Tamil teacher came all the way from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai to see for himself the change in his former pupil and pay his respects to the now famous Maharshi.

He sat unobtrusively among the visitors, but soon Bhagavan recognized him and had a copy of *Akshara-Mana-Malai* ("The Marital Garland of Letters") put into his hands. Glancing through it, the Pandit was pleased with its deep devotion and sound philosophy, but felt the need for help in understanding the full import of some passages. Mustering courage, he stood up, read out a verse and asked Bhagavan to explain it.

"Look at this", Bhagavan protested. "I ran away from school and home to escape such questions. And here he is after me, asking the same old question, 'what does this passage mean'?"

Everyone enjoyed the affection behind this mock complaint. Like the elders who learnt from Lord Swaminatha and Dakshinamurti, the school master whose questions were once intended to test the pupil's knowledge had now turned a disciple whose questions were aimed at removing his own ignorance.
SELF-ENQUIRY is probably the most important meditational practice of the yoga of knowledge, which itself can be regarded as the highest of the yogas. Self-enquiry is the culminating practice through which Self-realisation — the realisation of our true nature beyond mind and body — can be achieved. It is emphasised in the entire Vedantic tradition since early Upanishads like the Aitareya. A number of Advaitic texts, particularly the shorter works of Shankaracharya, describe it. Popular books like Ashtavakra Samhita, Avadhuta Gita, Yoga Vasistha and Adhyatma Ramayana also describe it. In modern times Self-enquiry has become known primarily through the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, who made it accessible to the general public. Traditionally it was given mainly to monks.

Because the teaching of Self-enquiry is direct and simple, literature on it is rarer than that on other yogic practices which require more detailed elucidation. In addition, this path requires a certain ripeness or readiness of mind that few aspirants truly have, so that it is seldom a popular practice.

The process of Self-enquiry is so simple that it can be explained in a few words. One traces the root of one's thoughts back to the I-thought, from which all other thoughts arise. This is initiated by the question 'Who am I?'. All our thoughts are based indirectly or directly on the thought of the Self. Our thoughts consist of two components: a subjective factor — I, me or mine — and an objective factor — a state, condition or object with which we are involved, above all our own body and mind. We get caught in the object portion and never look within to see our true nature apart from external conditioning mediums.

The result is that the pure I or I-in-itself is unknown to us. All that we call ourselves is but a conglomerate 'I am this' or 'this is mine', in which the subject is confused with an object. Self-enquiry consists of discarding the object portion to discover the pure subject. This requires withdrawing from the objects of sensation, emotion and thought by discriminating these from the formless Self. The truth is that we don’t know who we really are. What we call our Self is but some thought, emotion or sensation that we are temporarily identified with. Our lives are shrouded in ignorance about our true nature, springing from the most basic thoughts that we have, like our bodily identity. As long as we don’t question this process we must come to sorrow and remain in darkness.

The problem is that the senses present us with so many distractions that it is
difficult to look within. The purpose of Self-enquiry is to reverse this process of extroversion. The thought-current naturally moves back to the Self to the extent that we do not preoccupy our minds with outside stimulation. In this enquiry the mind is used in the right way. That is, it is turned into a tool of enquiry, not a means of enjoyment as we ordinarily use it.

If one presumes that Self-enquiry is also a mental activity, one may ask how can it serve to empty or negate the mind? The answer to this question is that it is not possible for the mind to simply be empty when its contents have not been released. Enquiry is therefore the means of emptying out the contents of the mind. Mental activity springs from a source, the 'I'-thought. We must go to the root of something to change it. This is to return to the 'I' thought in order to go beyond all other thoughts.

Self-enquiry is not a form of philosophical speculation or psychological analysis. This does not mean such practices as mindfulness, concentration or contemplation are not useful, that ethical disciples are not necessary, that mantra, pranayama or the study of scriptures do not have their place, but only that these are preliminary to Self-enquiry. One can follow ethical disciplines, place the body in a comfortable position, deepen the breath, withdraw the mind from sensory stimulation, develop concentration and do other yogic practices. But one should not stop with these practices. One should proceed to Self-enquiry. Only a rare individual can proceed directly to Self-enquiry.

Self-enquiry can be done at all times, places and circumstances. It does not require knowledge of special yoga techniques. It does not require that we otherwise try to overtly change ourselves or what we are doing.

Even a beginner can benefit from the practice of Self-enquiry. Our thoughts begin to subside as we realise that what we have called our Self is largely only an identification of the 'I' with some thought or feeling that is external and transient. We see that the more our thoughts deviate from Self-awareness, the more confusion and suffering is created for us. Yet though this process is not difficult to initiate, it is very difficult to sustain.

Most of us fail at Self-enquiry for two reasons; either we haven't prepared the ground for it properly or we haven't been consistent in our practice.

In the ultimate analysis the Self is the reality and our enquiry into it and all else that we do is merely a fiction of thought. It is the great maya of the Lord that requires not only our own selfless effort but divine grace in order to cross. Yet attempting this is the real purpose of our birth.
The Legend of the Monk Felix

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

One morning, all alone,
Out of his convent of grey stone,
Into the forest older, darker, greyer,
His lips moving as if in prayer,
His head sunken upon his breast,
As in a dream of rest,
Walked the Monk Felix. All about,
The broad sweet sunshine lay without,
Filling the summer air;
And within the woodlands as he trod,
The twilight was like the Truce of God
With worldly woe and care;
Under him lay the golden moss;
And above him the boughs of hemlock
Waved and made the sign of the cross,
And whispered their Benedicites;
And from the ground
Rose an odour sweet and fragrant
Of the wild flowers and the vagrant
Vines that wandered,
Seeking the sunshine, round and round.

These he heeded not, but pondered
On the volume in his hand,
A volume of St. Augustine,
Wherein he read of the unseen
Splendours of God's great town
In the unknown land,
And with his eyes cast down
In humility he said;

"I believe, O God,
What herein I have read,
But, alas! I do not understand!"

And lo! he heard
The sudden singing of a bird,
A snow-white bird from a cloud
Dropped down.
And among the branches brown
Sat singing
So sweet, and clear, and loud,
It seemed a thousand harp-strings
ringing.

And the Monk Felix closed his book,
And long, long,
With rapturous look,
He listened to the song,
And hardly breathed or stirred,
Until he saw, as in a vision,
The land Elysian,
And in the heavenly city heard
Angelic feet
Fall on the golden flagging of the street,
And he would fain
Have caught the wondrous bird,
But strove in vain;
For it flew away, away,
Far over hill and dell,
And instead of its sweet singing
He heard the convent bell
Suddenly in the silence ringing
For the service of noonday.
And retraced
His pathway homeward sadly and in haste.

In the convent there was a change!
He looked for each well known face,
But the faces were new and strange;
New figures sat in the oaken stalls,
New voices chanted in the choir;
Yet the place was the same place,
The same dusky walls
Of cold, grey stone,
The same cloisters and belfry and spire.

A stranger and alone
Among that brotherhood
The Monk Felix stood.
“Forty years,” said a Friar,
“Have I been Prior
Of this convent in the wood,
But for that space
Never have I beheld thy face!”

The heart of the Monk Felix fell,
And he answered with submissive tone,
“This morning, after the hour of Prime
I left my cell,
And wandered forth alone,
Listening all the time
To the melodious singing
Of a beautiful white bird,
Until I heard
The bells of the convent ringing
Noon from their noisy towers.
It was as if I dreamed;
For what to me had seemed
Moments only had been hours!”

“Years!” said a voice close by.
It was an aged monk who spoke

From a bench of oak
Fastened against the wall;—
He was the oldest monk of all.
For a whole century
Had he been there,
Serving God in prayer,
The meekest and humblest of His creatures,
He remembered well the features
Of Fleix, and he said,
Speaking distinct and slow:
“One hundred years ago,
When I was a novice in this place,
There was here a monk full of God’s grace,
Who bore the name
Of Felix, and this man must be the same.”

And straightway
They brought forth to the light of day
A volume old and brown,
A huge tome, bound
In brass and wild boar’s hide,
Wherein were written down
The names of all who had died
In the convent since it was edified.
And there they found,
Just as the old monk said,
That on a certain day and date,
One hundred years before,
Had gone forth from the convent gate
The Monk Felix, and never more
Had entered that sacred door.
He had been counted among the dead,
And they knew, at last,
That, such had been the power
Of that celestial and immortal song,
A hundred years had passed,
And had not seemed so long
As a single hour.
Bishrul Hafi: A rare soul

By Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma

BISHRUL HAFI is an unconventional Sri Lankan Muslim descended from Arab settlers on the island. One of his ancestors was a saint named Hajiar Appa. He is a rare soul and considered a Sufi mystic.

Once a businessman, he experienced an inward transformation in his late thirties. He began leading a contemplative life and spent much of his time in the solitude of his rubber-estate bungalow. There he prayed to Allah.

"During the seven years I lived on the estate," he recalls, "I purified my heart. I didn't care for clothes. I don't care what others call me. I only care about what my Creator calls me."

Hafi is now a Justice of the Peace. He shuns all publicity and loves his quiet life in a rural hamlet about twenty miles from Colombo. Although considered by others as a man of God, Hafi has no such estimation about himself. He regards himself as nothing more than an ordinary person. A visitor once exclaimed, "What a great mystic you are!" To this Hafi replied, "I am not of any importance. I am not even a speck of dust in the universe. Only the Creator matters, not me, and I am unworthy of Him."

The following incident from his life would reveal his reverence for the traditions of other religions:

One evening Hafi was reading from the Dhammapada, the great Buddhist classic. He was wide awake. He noticed that his subtle body was being lifted out of its physical frame. It soared higher and higher until he had a vivid vision of the Buddha in a blessing pose. Hafi said that it was the most ecstatic of all his spiritual experiences. When he mentioned this to a group of Buddhist monks, they expressed amazement. They could understand his having experiences in the Islamic tradition but not in the Buddhist one. Thereupon Hafi quoted from Prophet Mohammed who had enjoined Muslims to revere all prophets.

Hafi is a good conversationalist with a fine command of English. Ask him a question and words of wisdom flow from his lips. It is not unusual for him, in the midst of a solemn discussion, to crack jokes or relate stories. From time to time serious seekers call on him to discuss spiritual matters.

The writer has had the privilege of sitting and talking to Hafi for hours. The following are excerpts from such conversations during the visit of the writer to Sri Lanka in 1994:

**Question**: What is the best spiritual practice?

**Hafi**: Any vehicle is good — Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam or any other religion. If you have an open mind you will naturally venerate all
religions. Skip all the rituals. Take the essence of religions and practise it. But keep quiet about your spiritual practices. Do not talk about them. It is like the marital relationship of a couple that is private.

Q: Why is there no spiritual unfoldment despite our doing spiritual exercises?

H: The enemy of spirituality is vanity. I think it was Sri Ramakrishna who said that the greatest vanity is the vanity of the saint.

Q: You set great store by spiritual practice. Which do you prefer: meditation, prayer or social service?

H: All three are enticing.

Q: Do you advocate self-reliance in spiritual matters?

H: You were born alone and you will die alone. You are an individual. Don't be an ape. You are responsible for your own actions. Your troubles are of your own making. Therefore, be your own teacher and do not follow anyone. Develop your uniqueness and find your own path to God. If you depend on others to direct your spiritual path, isn't that like having a wet nurse throughout your life?

Q: What are your views on dreams?

H: Sleep is the half-brother of death. If one overeats, the mind is prone to nightmares. If one has failed to eat enough and is therefore hungry, sound sleep becomes difficult. Avoiding both extremes, eat moderately. Then there is a possibility of having visions and prophetic dreams.

Q: How does one deal with someone who is evil?

H: Don't have anything to do with him. Your only friend in this world is your maker. Therefore, realise the God who dwells within yourself. Remember the Islamic saying: "If you take one step towards me, I shall take ten steps towards you." You have no real friend except God.

Q: What is your attitude to suffering?

H: Great attainments become possible only through suffering. When you suffer, don't try to avoid it but endure suffering with full resignation.

Q: In India there are religious people who concentrate their minds on the primordial sound. Do you approve of this method of meditation?

H: The sound OM is the hum of creation. The sound of this sacred syllable pervades everything. It is this hum that sustains everything. Should this hum cease, the world will also cease. This hum emanated from light. It is from light that everything came into existence.

Q: For you, nothing in life is more important than prayer. Please give a few guidelines.

H: The whole world is my prayer-mat. I pray to God who is everywhere.

There is an interval between any two thoughts. It is in this space that creativity is born. During prayer you can widen these intervals. This state is best for praying but you should be fully conscious without falling asleep. Your prayer must be vast. The mind must be unbounded so that you are one with nature. Then,
unknowingly, the effects of your prayer will come about.

Realise your powerlessness when praying to the One who is all powerful. Reduce yourself to nothing. You truly pray when your mind loses its habitual activity and becomes passive. Then the mind is like a piece of cotton wool wafting in the air. That is the ideal state for praying.

There is no particular time or place for praying. One may pray at any time or any place. There are prescribed forms of prayer that one is expected to observe. The Muslim who is required to pray five times a day frequently acts mechanically when he prays. Does he pray with all his mind and heart? Is he not just acting in the way he has been trained? Praying should be a spontaneous act that flows from the very depths of one’s being. When praying, one should be totally committed to God. During prayer the ego should be absent and He alone present in your consciousness.

Mohammed, the Holy Prophet of Islam, used to be in a trance when he prayed. So deep was his trance that immediately after praying he would fail to recognise his wife and children.

All nature is in a prayerful state. The tall trees are praying in a standing posture; the bent trees are bowing in reverence, and creepers are prostrating themselves before him. The bodily postures that a Muslim assumes when he prays are the very same that are observable in nature. All creation prays to the Creator.

Don’t force yourself to pray. Engage yourself in prayer only if you are driven by intense devotion to worship the one God.

In life, every action must be regarded as an offering to God. Every action is then a kind of prayer. So your whole life becomes a continuous prayer.

Ask nothing when you pray. If anything is asked at all, then ask God to punish you to the extent that you have asked favours of him.

Submit yourself entirely to Allah and leave it at that.

Know that He alone is the Provider. If He gives you nothing, be content with your lot and be just as happy as you would have been if He had given you everything.
The Various Texts of ‘Who am I? - 5

By Michael James

Text - C

Among the note books and other manuscripts of Sri M. Sivaprakasam Pillai there are a number of drafts on Who am I? not only in Tamil but also in English. For instance, in notebook SP-20 on pp. 124-134 and 114-115 there is a rough draft of an English translation of text A (with the addition of various sentences and passages not in text A) in the handwriting of Sivaprakasam Pillai, initialed MS and dated 21-2-23. Similarly in notebook SP-17 on pp.1-20 there is another rough draft in English which is a revised and slightly expanded version of the above-said translation of text A in SP-20. In this revised draft, which is signed M. Sivaprakasam and dated 25-2-23, question and answer 1 of text A has been expanded as three questions and answers (I-III)\(^1\), 2-6 are given as IV-VIII, 7 is modified and expanded as IX, 8 is given as X, 9 is given with the addition of two useful sentences\(^2\) as XI, then two extra questions and answers are given as XII and XIII, which are a modified and slightly expanded translation of points 4 and 5 of text AS, and finally 10-13 are given with slight modification and expansion as XIV-XVII.

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\(^1\) The first question which Sri M. Sivaprakasam Pillai asked Sri Bhagavan was “Nan yar?” (Who am I?), to which he replied simply, “Arive nan”, which means knowledge (or consciousness) alone is ‘T’. Since this answer of Sri Bhagavan was so very terse and cryptic yet so full of profound meaning and implication, while drafting the early texts of Nan Yar Sivaprakasam Pillai expanded this one question and answer as questions and answers 1 and 2 in which he added for his own clarity of understanding the traditional scriptural teaching of ‘neti neti’ (not thus, not thus), and while rewriting the earlier drafts as an essay (text F) Sri Bhagavan felt it appropriate to retain this addition of Sivaprakasam Pillai, presumably because he knew that it would be useful for other devotees just as it was for Sivaprakasam Pillai. The fact that this ‘neti neti’ teaching was not actually said by Sri Bhagavan but was added by Sivaprakasam Pillai was told by his disciple Manikkam Pillai to Sri Sadhu Om Swami, who told it to me. In the light of this information, it is interesting to see how in this English draft on pp.1-5 of SP-17 Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai further expanded this addition to form questions and answers I-IV (as also to a lesser extent he expanded it on pp. 124-126 of SP-20).

\(^2\) See note 7 below.
The Mountain Path

Of all the English drafts of \textit{Who am I?} made by Sivaprakasam Pillai, perhaps the most interesting is one that I shall call text C. A very rough draft of text C is written in pencil in SP-8, and a slightly revised but still rough draft is written in ink in SP-22, but the clearest draft is written by Sivaprakasam Pillai in a separate manuscript which is preserved in the Asramam archives and catalogued as No.1201 (Eng-A-2). Though none of these drafts are dated, the editing of the matter in this text makes it appear to be a draft intermediate between text A, which was written before 6-1-1920, and text D, which is dated 21-2-1924. The following is an exact reproduction of text C as it was written by Sivaprakasam Pillai in archive manuscript 1201, retaining the same spelling, punctuation and capitalisation used by him, and making no change other than to italicise the questions and the Tamil and Sanskrit words used by him in the text.

\textbf{Who am I?}

Only the enquiry into the nature of the true Self by incessantly putting the question \textit{“Who am I?”} will lead one to 
\textit{mukti} or freedom from bondage.

I. \textit{Who am I?}

(1) I am not the physical body composed of the seven substances, flesh, blood, bones, fat, brain, sperm and skin.

(2) I am not any of the five sensory organs, through which the sensations of sounds, touches, forms, smells and tastes are perceived.

(3) I am not any of the five organs of action by which the acts of speaking, walking, giving, excreting faeces and copulating are performed.

(4) I am not \textit{‘pranam’} which under five different names performs five different functions, viz, respiration, circulation, deglutition, digestion and supporting the body.

(5) I am not the mind, which thinks.

(6) I am not nescience, in which neither phenomena exist nor actions are performed but only unconscious traces of phenomena and actions exist.

II. \textit{If I am not any of the abovedescribed things, then who am I?}

I am consciousness, which, after negating or eliminating as non-self all the abovesaid things, remains as the only residuum.

III. \textit{What is the nature of consciousness?}

Consciousness is eternal and blissful. Consciousness has no attributes; it is not different from
bliss and bliss is not different from
consciousness. It is the state where
the thought of I does not at all
exist. This is also called Monam (si-
lence). Only this Atma has real
existence. Noting else has real ex-
istence. The universe (jagat), egos
(jeevas) and God (Iswara) are all
illusions, just as, when mother of
pearl appears as silver, the latter is
an illusion. Therefore God, I and
other jeevas, and jagat are all Atma-
sorupam. Everything is Sivasarupam
i.e. Atma-Sorupam.

IV. When will Atma-Sorupam (self) be
realised?
When the phenomenal universe
disappears, the noumenal Atma-
Sorupam will be realised.

V. Cannot sorupam be realised even when
the phenomenal universe exists?
Cannot be; the noumenon and the
phenomena are like the real rope
and the illusory serpent; will there
be the perception of the real rope,
so long as the perception of the
illusory serpent does not cease?

VI. When will the illusory universe
disappear?
The universe will disappear, when
the mind, which is the cause of all
thoughts is controlled and kept
quiet.

VII. What is the nature of mind?
Mind is nothing but thoughts. Of
all thoughts, which are manifested
by the mind, the thought of I is
the first. Only after this thought
rises, the other thoughts rise. With-
out the 1st person, there cannot
be either the 2nd or 3rd person.
The mind is, therefore that which
emerges out as I. Just as a spider
spins a thread and then absorbs it
back into its own body, so the mind
unfolds the universe and then folds
it back into its own self.

The mind is a power. It manifests
itself as all the objects of the
universe. When it is dissolved into
Self (Atma-sorupam), Sorupam will
shine. When it emerges out, the
universe will appear. Therefore
when the universe appears, Sorupam
will not shine.

The mind will always be found con-
nected with a physical body. It is
never found alone. The mind is
also called sutchma-sariram (subtle
body) and jeeva (ego).

VIII. How can the mind be controlled and
kept quiet?
The mind can be successfully
controlled only be enquiring who
I am. This enquiry will destroy all
other thoughts and then it will

Sorupam is a Tamilised form of the Sanskrit
word Swarupam, which literally means 'own
form' and which Sri Bhagavan often uses ei-
ther alone or in combination with the word
atma to denote one's own true nature, the real
Self.

In SP-17, p.9, Sivaprakasam Pillai explains this
idea by adding in brackets "i.e. the motive to
know the real Self will destroy all other mo-
tives" after the words "This thought of 'Who
am I?' will destroy all other thoughts".
itself die as the corpse-burning stick. Then Atma-sorupam will shine. When the thought of I stops, breathing will also stop. Ahankara (the thought of I) and breathing originate from the same source. Whatever is done, should be done without ahankara (egoism). If one be so, even one's wife will appear to one as the Mother (Goddess) of the universe. He is the greatest bakta (devotee) who sacrifices himself (i.e. his ego or ahankara) into the Atma-sorupam, which is God.

If in the course of Atmic enquiry, any other thought or desire rises, no attempt should be made to realise or fulfil it; but the question, "to whom does that thought or desire rise?" should be immediately put. If this question be put, the answer will be "to me". At once the question, "Who am I?" should be put. If this question be put, the mind will return to its seat i.e. the heart, and the thought, which disturbed the enquiry, will vanish. The more and more the mind is trained in this manner, it will attain greater and greater power to remain at its seat. 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. If, by the above described practice, the mind remains steadfastly at the heart all thoughts will vanish. Then, the thought of I also will vanish. Then, only that which has real existence will shine. The ego will die and Self alone will shine. Self is Atma-sorupam.

The first thought of the mind is the thought of I. What is it that is thought of as I? Although the whole body is generally identified with Self and spoken of as I, it should be ascertained what particular spot in the body is primarily identified with Self and called I. On deep inward contemplation, it will be found that that spot lies inside the chest. It is the place where emotions, such as pride, anger, fear, sexual passion etc. are first felt. Thinking this spot as I is the first thought of the mind. This is the thought, which ought to be crushed. When the mind emerges out through the brain and the senses, phenomena such as names and forms appear. When it stays at the heart, phenomena do not appear. Retaining the mind at the heart is called antararmukam or turning it inward; and letting it out through the senses is called bharirmukam or turning it outward.

IX. Are there no other methods of controlling the mind?

There are no other suitable methods except that of Atmic enquiry. If the mind is controlled by

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5 These three sentences are not found as such in any Tamil text. Compare passages 4 and 19 of text AS, and also note 17 on p.52 of the Mountain Path, Aradhana issue 1995.
6 This paragraph is not found as such in any Tamil text, but is found in part in passage 4 of text AS.
other methods, it will keep quiet only for a short time and then resume its activity\(^7\). The mind can also be controlled by the control of breath. But, only so long as _pranān_ remains quiet, the mind will be quiet. When _pranān_ resumes its work the mind will do the same. So, by _prānāyaṃmāra_ (control of breath), the mind cannot be entirely controlled and dissolved into self. But _prānāyaṃmāra_ will serve as an aid to one engaged in _Atmā_ enquiry. Similarly meditation of a definite form (_mūrtam_) and muttering of a _mantrā_ (name of God) will help one who is engaged in the same enquiry. The mind attains the power of concentrating itself on a single object by means of meditating on a single form or muttering a single name. The mind is in constant motion like the trunk of an elephant. If a chain is placed in it, it takes a fast hold of it and does not touch other things. So also, if the mind is trained in the meditation of a single form or name, it becomes attached to it and gives up other thoughts. Since the mind manifests itself as countless thoughts, it is very weak in concentration. As thoughts become less and less its power of concentration increases. Hence, _Atmā_ enquiry becomes easy to the mind, which has attained the ability to concentrate itself on a single object. Temperance in eating and taking only such food, as will keep the mind in a peaceful state, furthers the progress of _Atmā_ enquiry. Of all the rules laid down for _mumukṣu_ (persons desirous of attaining _mukti_) the rule regarding diet is the best. _Ahankāra_ will be subdued, if a _mumukṣu_ lives upon food got by begging.\(^8\)

**X.** _Numberless thoughts appear from vasanas, the traces contained in the mind, as waves in the ocean. When will they all disappear?_ As meditation grows stronger and stronger, thoughts will become less and less.\(^9\)

**XI.** _Is it possible to destroy all traces of thoughts ingrained in the mind from time immemorial and be as Self?_ The mind should be fixed so stead-

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\(^7\) In the English text written in SP-17, on p.11 two more sentences are added here which are not in text A: "By the method of Enquiry or _Vichāram_, which is the straight road to Self-realisation, the mind will entirely dissolve itself into the _Atmā_ and die. By the other methods, it will not die but remain quiescent only for short intervals". The same two sentences are also given in a briefer form in the English text written in SP-20 on p.131.

\(^8\) This last sentence is not found in most Tamil texts except text D, in which it is given as stray saying 2. Similarly, on p.14 of the Tamil biography _Sri Sivaprakasam Charitamum Malaryum_, Mannikam Pillai records that Sri Bhagavan once said to Sivaprakasam Pillai, "Eating by begging alms from house to house to drive away the affliction of hunger, is a means to destroy the ego" (see also p.82 of _The Inner Circle_ compiled by A.R. Natarajan).

\(^9\) On p.16 of SP-17, Sivaprakasam Pillai records this teaching more clearly in the words, "As Self-meditation increases more and more in strength, the other thoughts will become weaker and weaker and die away".
fastly in the meditation of Atma Sorupam that it will not be possible for it to entertain even this thought of doubt. If however any doubt arises, no attempt should be made to clear it, but it should at once be questioned to whom that doubt arises and the thought of doubt killed in the manner already described. If, in this manner, the mind’s nature be enquired into, the mind will end in Self. Even though a man be a great sinner, he should not grow disconsolate as to whether he will attain mukti or not; he should forget even the thought of his being a sinner and concentrate his whole mind on Atma Sorupam. Such a man only will get success.

XII. How long should this enquiry last?
This enquiry is required as long as there are traces of thoughts in the mind. As long as there are enemies in a fort, they will be coming out. If, as they come out, they are all killed, the fort will be got possession of. Similarly, as thoughts arise, they should all be crushed by the above said intelligent enquiry. Firm resoluteness (vairagyam) consists in crushing all thoughts without exception, just as they rise, at the very place of their origin. Enquiry should not cease until Atma Sorupam is realised. Stop not until the goal is reached. Just as pearl sinkers dive deep into the sea with weights attached to their bodies and take out the pearls, so also one, who dives deep into one’s own Self with firm resoluteness, will obtain the pearls of Atmic bliss. Even though a man may have many duties to perform, he can and must devote all his leisure to self meditation. Incessant cherishing of the thought of Self-sorupam is what is required. If however it happens to be forgotten, it should be got hold of firmly, when it comes back to memory again.

XIII. Are not all these due to the will (desire) of God?
Just as, in the presence of the Sun, which rises and moves without motive, desire or effort, the sun-stone emits fire, water evaporates and all beings on earth act and cease to act and just as needles move in the presence of a magnet, so in the presence of God, who is free from any desire or motive, the three great actions of Creation, Protection and Destruction (or the five great actions of Creation, Protection, Destruction, Causing ignorance and Granting wisdom) take place. The jeevas, who are subject to the influence of these actions act and die in accordance with their past karma. Apart from this, God

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10 This sentence is not found as such in any Tamil text.
11 This sentence is not found in any Tamil text, but is found in the English drafts in SP-20 (p.115) and SP-17 (p.18).
12 Compare these last three sentences of answer XII with passage 5 of text AS and see note 6 on p.49 of The Mountain Path, Aradhana issue 1999.
does not possess any motive or desire. He will not be affected by any karma, just as the actions of earthly beings do not affect the Sun and just as the qualities of the four bhutas, fire, air, earth and water do not affect the Sky (Space), the fifth bhuta.

XIV. How far is it necessary for one desirous of attaining mukti to enquire into and understand the nature and functions of organs and elements comprised in the body and the universe respectively, which are non-self?

A sweeper engaged in a shaving saloon should simply sweep away the whole quantity of hair cropped off. It is of no use to him to classify the hairs under different heads and to enquire or understand their qualities. So, one who wants to know his own true Self should simply reject as non-self all the organs and elements together. There is no necessity for him to classify them under various heads and investigate their nature or functions. The whole universe should be regarded as a dream.

XV. How far is the study of shastras (books on philosophy) useful to mumukshus?

In every shastra, it is laid down that the mind should be controlled and destroyed for attaining mukti. So, after knowing that the destruction of mind is the one and the same purpose of all the shastras, what is the use of learning shastras without limit? Atmic enquiry is required to control the mind. Atmic enquiry consists in turning the mind inward into the Self. Self exists within the five kosams (sheaths) viz., Annamayakosam, Pranamayakosam etc. All these kosams have to be rejected as non-Self before enquiring who I am or what Self is. There is therefore, no use of studying books, which lie outside the five kosams. At one time, all book-learning will have to be forgotten.

XVI. What is bliss? Does it exist in Atma (Self) or in the objects of the universe?

The very nature (sorupam) of Atma is bliss. Atma sorupam and bliss are not different. There is no other bliss except Atmic bliss. There is no bliss in any of the objects of the universe. As matter of fact, whenever our desires are fulfilled, the mind returns to its seat and enjoys only the Atmic bliss. But we wrongly think that we get this bliss from the objects of our desire. Similarly, in sleep, breathless shocks, and samadi (Self-realisation) the mind turns inward and enjoys only the Atmic bliss. In this manner, the mind emerges from and returns to the Atma incessantly. When it goes out from Atma, it suffers misery. The shade beneath a tree is cool. Beyond the tree, the heat of the sun is burning. One, who wanders outside, returns to the shade and enjoys the coolness. After a short time, he goes out and finding that the heat is unbearable again returns to the shade. In this manner, he goes out into the hot plain and returns to the shade again and
again. This man is an ignorant man. He is a wise man, who never leaves the shade. Similarly, the mind of a Gmani (one who has realised his true Self) does not leave the Brahham (Atma sorupam). But the mind of an agnani (one who has not realised his self) goes out into the world and suffers misery and afterwards returns to the Brahham for a short time and enjoys bliss. The jagat (universe) consists of only thoughts or phenomena. When the jagat disappears, the mind enjoys bliss; when it appears, the mind suffers misery.

XVII. Is there no difference between the experiences of a dream and those of the waking state?

The experiences of the waking state are firm; those of a dream are not firm. Except this, there is no difference. The transactions which occur in a dream appear to be at the time of dreaming as much real as the transactions which occur in the waking state appear to be at the time of wakefulness. Both in the waking and dreaming states, thought (memory) and phenomena (names, forms, etc) appear and disappear simultaneously.

XVIII. Is it not possible for God and Guru to make a jeeva realise his Siva-sorupam?

It is possible for God and Guru to enable jeevas to attain mukti, by showing to them the way to attain it. Everyone should, by his own effort, follow the path pointed out by God or Guru and achieve mukti. One should know one's own true self through one's own mental eye (gnanadhrishti). How is it possible to know the Self through others? Is a mirror required for Rama to know that he is Rama?

XIX. What is the meaning of gnanadhristi or seeing through the mind's eye?

Gnanadhristi or seeing through the mind's eye means keeping the mind quiet. Keeping the mind quiet means dissolving the mind in Atma. Gnanadhristi does not mean clairvoyance or knowing others' thoughts or occurrences of the past and future.

XX. What is the connection between non-attachment (nirasai) and knowledge of Self (gnanam)?

Non-attachment and gnanam are not different. In gnanam (Self-realisation or knowledge of Self), nothing appears but Self. Non-attachment means not attending to any of the affairs of the universe.

XXI. What is the difference between vicharam (Atmic enquiry) and meditation (of Atma or Self)?

Meditation means the thinking of one's true self as Brahman, Sachitananda etc. Enquiry means the concentration of the mind on one's own true Self.

XXII. What is the meaning of offering one's ego as sacrifice to God?

Sacrificing the ego to God means keeping the mind always engaged
in the contemplation of Atma sorupam and never allowing it to think of other things.

XXIII. What is the meaning of the term, "mukti"?

Mukti means knowing one's own true Self by enquiring who the person is that is in bondage. Mukti also means complete destruction of all traces of thoughts existing in the mind.

1. God accepts and bears all the burdens we throw upon Him.
2. Just as what is seized by the tiger will not be left uneaten, so he, on whom the Guru has bestowed his looks of grace, will surely be saved.
3. The more and more humble your behaviour is towards others, the better and better it is for you.
4. You may stay in any place, if only you keep your mind under control.
5. Do not hate others, however bad they may be.
6. Be detached from the affairs of the world.
7. As far as possible, do not interfere in the affairs of others.
8. Whatever one gives to others is given to oneself. Anyone who knows this truth will not fail to give.
9. Never break your word.  
10. The dictates of the Guru should be strictly obeyed.
11. The term "I" has two meanings. One meaning is Atma Sorupam (True Self), which is eternal. The other is the ego (ahamkaram) which has beginning and an end.
12. As soon as the thought "I" rises, other things also rise. As soon as this "I" subsides, other things also subside.
13. There are no two minds as good and bad. There is only one mind. Its thoughts are of two kinds, good and bad. When it creates good thoughts, it is called good mind. When it creates bad thoughts, it is called bad mind.
14. A man may run forward however fast he may like. But it is difficult for him to run fast backward. So, the mind will work very briskly in the outward direction; but it will be difficult for it to turn and go inward.

These words of Sri Bhagavan are also recorded in text D (stray saying 9) and text E (stray saying 8), but do not occur in any of the later texts of Nan Yar?

This saying is also recorded in text AS (passage 17), but not in any printed text of Nan Yar?

This saying is also recorded in text AS (towards the end of passage 5) and text D (stray saying 1), but not in any printed text of Nan Yar?
Guru
By Non-Entity

GURU IS Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Maheswara, Guru is Parabrahman, the Supreme" — so goes the prayer. 'God, Guru and the Self are identical' says Bhagavan Sri Ramana. "Guru is only one and He is not physical". Nevertheless, a personal Guru in flesh and blood appears in the world in the form of a jivanmukta. Brahmavatsara asserts that only a jivanmukta can divulge true jnana and that only a liberated person can liberate others. To a questioner who wished to know whether any one can meet the appointed Guru, Sri Ramana replied that "intense meditation brings it about."

Sri Ramana had no Guru. Sri J. Krishnamurthi considered that no Guru is necessary; Sri Ramana however added the clause that "one can say so only after realising and not before." Guru is a powerful aid to a seeker. Bhagavan asks, "Can spectacles and the sun see for you? You yourself have to see your true nature." Guru can therefore be an aid only. A true Guru "does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom" but "leaves you at the threshold of your own mind." A person's prarabdha has a great influence on one's quest for liberation. In rare cases a Guru showers his abundant grace on a sincere deserving disciple. Sri Ramana has explained that "the cosmic mind manifesting in some rare being is able to effect the linkage in others of the individual (weak) mind with the universal (strong) mind of the inner recess. Such a rare being is called the Guru, or God in manifestation."

"All Gurus are one," said the great Sai Baba of Shirdi. This is an axiomatic truth because Guru is one who has found his identity with the All. Some feel that to follow more than one Guru is not correct; but Bhagavan has mentioned that the ancient Avadhuta had more than 24 masters and that one of them was an inanimate Guru! Loyalty to one Guru is beneficial though one should regard all masters as divine.

To an earnest seeker a Guru is essential. In the words of the Master of the Bahai sect, "A mediator is necessary between man and the creator — one who receives the full light of the divine splendour — to radiate it over the human world. If a man wishes to know God he must find Him in the perfect mirror — GURU".
BOOK REVIEWS

In the Charge of J. JAYARAMAN

ON AN ETERNAL VOYAGE: An inward journey to freedom including dialogues with J. Krishnamurti. By Vimala Thakar. Pub. Vimal Parivar, 1 Alankar, Sion Main Road., Sion (W), Bombay 400 022. 1995, pp85, Rs. 30.

If freedom can come only with the ending of everything that is known, that is the ending of tradition itself, then what happens to an ‘eternal tradition’ which accords primacy to the guru-sishya parampara such as ours? It is true that despite all his protestations to the contrary Krishnamurti can easily be absorbed into this tradition just as Buddha was much earlier. It is equally true that tradition is apparent only to the unenlightened mind. For those who are free there is no separation between guru and sishya, past and future. The importance of Krishnamurti lies in his relentless exposure of the hypocrisies of spirituality, which at their worst serve to perpetuate the ego through elaborate formulae for attaining liberation. Unlike most modernists, K never lost sight of the wholeness of awareness, and was thus one of the few who reaffirmed, revitalized and revived the best in our tradition even while frontally attacking what was worst in it.

Vimala Thakar’s book helps us get an intimate glimpse into Krishnamurti’s ‘method’. Of all the books that Vimalaji has published this is probably the most famous, already running into an eighth edition. The book documents the total transformation that took place in the author’s life when she came in contact with K. From being a well-known Sarvodaya worker, she became a free lance parivarjaka, an itinerant pointer to the truth, in the same tradition as her ‘guru’, Krishnamurti. If listening to his talks did play a major role in precipitating Vimalaji’s implosion into freedom, it was the healing experience that K effected which actually brought her process to a culmination. Krishnamurti cured her severe ear-infection and deafness through his touch. But this event could also be considered as the giving of diksha through touch, for she experienced in the days that followed, “the invasion of a new awareness, irresistible, uncontrollable and transcending prejudices and preferences”. Vimalaji felt the two events were related and expressed to K that she was transcending prejudices and preferences”. Vimalaji felt the two events were related and expressed to K that she was transcending prejudices and preferences”. Vimalaji felt the two events were related and expressed to K that she was transcending prejudices and preferences”. Vimalaji felt the two events were related and expressed to K that she was transcending prejudices and preferences”.

What is remarkable is the genuine and authentic independence Vimalaji’s subsequent life demonstrates, though her vocabulary is largely derived from Krishnamurti’s. One proof of spiritual mastery is in the proliferation of spiritual beings around it.

The other point of interest for me is a somewhat minor one. On the eve of China’s invasion of India, K as this book shows, had a clearer perception of the threat to India than her leaders did. But what is interesting is that he was so concerned about the destruction of the very same ancient civilization of India which he had criticized so vehemently. Finally and thankfully though, K was proved wrong on the latter point. China did not succeed in destroying Indian civilization.

— Makarand Paranjape


PEACE PILGRIM: Her life and work in her own words. pp224, $14.95. Both pub. by Blue Dove Press, P Box 261611, CA 92196, USA.

STEPS TOWARD INNER PEACE: pp24. Contact: Friends of Peace Pilgrim, 43480 Cedar Avenue, CA 92544, USA.

After going the rounds of ‘gurus’ if you are filled with the desire to meet in flesh an individual who was actually living the ideals all of us want so much to believe in, then read on. If you have sought proof of living truth, and are no longer content with gurus who are ‘realized’ only during ‘darshan’ hours, then it is possible you have glimpsed the living truth of Ramana Maharshi, and are wondering if this century of ours has anymore to offer.

Peace was born in 1910, was a great gardener by the time she was five, and refused to have her tonsils out at six: “If there is nothing the matter with them I won’t have them out. They must have some purpose”. At school she first read about the Golden Rule: Overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth, and hatred with love. It was to affect her entire life. To peers at high school who tried to pressurize her into smoking and drinking she replied, “Look nobody can stop you from making your choices — but I have a right to my choices too, and I have chosen freedom.” Hers was to prove a freedom from fear, from negative thinking, unnecessary possessions, meaningless activities and even dying. In 1938 Peace entered a 15-years ‘spiritual growing up’ when she worked with senior citizens, people with problems and various peace organizations. In 1937 she walked the 2050-mile Appalachian Trail (carrying only a plastic sheet and powdered milk and oatmeal), the first woman to do so. From 1963, for 28 years (till her death by accident on road) Peace walked over 30,000 miles on foot, a pilgrimage not to a place, but for a purpose. In 1953 she attained what she called a ‘permanent state of inner peace’ and felt she was ‘plugged into Universal supply’. She defines evolution as “the awakening of the divine nature within us”. To her God is a power greater than ourselves which manifests itself within us, as well as everywhere else in the universe”. She describes her own unfoldment thus: “The body, mind and emotions are instruments which can be used either by the self-centered nature or by the God-centered nature which is centered in the good of the whole. When you begin the spiritual growing up you go into direct struggle between the two natures. The Illumination experience is the first glimpse of what the life of inner peace is like. It is a feeling of complete and absolute oneness with all creation ..... After the first glimpse of inner peace you slip in and out, and then you get onto the plateau, where you are most of the time, and are only slipping out of harmony.
As a 'universal man', prolific writer and an impeccable reviewer, Sri M.P. Pandit is no stranger to the readers of 'The Mountain Path'. This book on him is divided in three parts. The first part presents a brief biography of Pandit. The second is an essay 'Sri M.P. Pandit As I Know Him' by the author. The third part contains a complete list of Pandit's work.

The important events in Pandit's life have been brought out well in this book. His spiritual inclination even as a child, his coming into contact with Kayakantha Ganapati Muni and Kapali Sastry, his coming under the spell of Sri Aurobindo, his complete surrender at the altar of Mother's Love have been outlined, wherever possible in M.P. Pandit's own words, extracted from his various works.

The book has been reverentially written and is reasonably priced.

— G.J.K.

**SERVICE: Ideal and Aspects:** a Vedanta Kesari presentation. Pub: RK Math, Madras 600 004. 1993, pp320, Rs. 25.

This collection of articles by different people, under this title is of a high standard. The first part presents the ideal of service as viewed by the major religions of the world — the Sanatana Dharma, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The very first article by Swami Vivekananda, so short, so succinct, tells in a nutshell all that has to be said on service. The introduction and all other articles are an elaboration of what Vivekananda has said so beautifully. The contributors include monks of the Ramakrishna Order, an American Rabbi, as well as Professors from prestigious Universities. The article of Prof. Rahman deserves special mention for the candid acknowledgment of the wide gap between precept and practice regarding this ideal even in his religion.

The second part dealing with aspects of service analyses the practical application of this ideal in the modern context. The impassioned outpouring of Pravalka Virajparna in 'Service to the Planet' is widely informative and deeply stirring. Respect as Service' by Sw. Vidyatmananda presents a vital aspect in an original approach. Rabbi Asher Block does a telling analysis of what it means 'to do unto others what you would do unto yourself' through four syllogistic situations: the satanic (what is mine is mine even as what is mine is mine), and the saintly (what is mine is thine even as what is thine is thine) form two extremes. Between these two lie the motivated quid-pro-quo (what is mine is thine provided what is thine is mine) and the seemingly neutral (what is mine is mine, and what is thine is thine). The last is actually the lion claiming to offer equal opportunity to the lamb; the kind of hypocrisy that destroyed the city of Sodom.

Vedanta points out how ideal service is done: not with pity and compassion but with devotion and gratitude; not as an obligation but as worship of the Creator. Sri Ramana summed it all with the dissolution of the entity that claims authorship, all activity (of body, mind, whatever) is service.

The imaginative front cover by Maniam Selvan captures the spirit of the book. There is only one minor printing error...
in this fine book, the first and last sentences in p.288 are incomplete.

— N.S. Krishnan

SRI SADASIVA BRAHMENDRA: tr. from Tamil by Dr. Prema Nadakumar. Pub: Rani Bhavani Devi Memorial Trust, Chittapalli, A.P. 1993, pp96, Rs. 30.

India has been a land where countless number of great men have been born during each era. They have sustained the Sanatana Dharma and some of them have enriched our literature by their inspired outpouring of Bhajans and Kirtans.

Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra of Nerur was one such who lived about 300 years ago. He attained the highest level of spiritual experiences as well as attendant super-natural powers. He had mastery of the five yogas: Mandira Parisha (Spanda?), Bhava, Abhava and Mahayoga. It is said that constant recitation of the Mantra and uniting one’s breath with it enabled him to fly, enter another body, remain invisible and so on. This was Parisha yoga, also known as Kundalini yoga.

His Kirtans and Bhajans are highly creative in poetic forms and reveal his musical mastery. Smt. Prema Nandakumar has done an yeoman service by translating the original Tamil biography of Brahmendra by Sadasaivananda into English. Many of Brahmendra’s Kirtanas have been included. One wishes his other works like Atmavidyā Vilāsa and Swamanasaka Puja had also been included. The Sankar Matham, Kumbakonam had in 1943 published a compendium of his works with word for word translations by V. Narayanan in Tamil and English.

Even today the sannadhi of the Master at Nerur continues to draw devotees from far who find peace and guidance from his continuing Presence.

— Arvind H. Bharucha

JAGADGURU SRI CHANDraseKHarA BHARATI

The Mahaswami was the 34th pontiff of the famed Sri Sarada Peetha at Sringeri, the first of the four Mathas founded by the great Adi Sankara. Known as Narasimha Sastri in his poornavishrama, he was born in a very poor but noble family noted for its exemplary piety, strict observance of scriptural injunctions and great learning. Very early in life, he had the gracious blessings of Sri Narasimha Bharati, the then acharya of Sarada Peetha who initiated him with Neelakanta Trikshari mantra.

Narasimha Sastri was an ideal disciple; he had complete control over his mind and senses, was full of Vairagya and had extraordinary love and devotion to his guru Sri Narasimha Bharati. Endowed with prodigious intellect and phenomenal memory, he mastered with great ease the intricate sciences of Tarka, Vyakarana, Mimamsa and Vedanta. No wonder, he was duly selected as successor to Sri Narasimha Bharati and during his tenure as the head of the Matha for over forty years, he rigidly followed in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessors and maintained and enhanced the prestige and reputation of the Math by his unrivalled learning, overflowing love and grace towards all who sought him and above all by his inheritance in the exalted state of absorption in Self, the goal of all spiritual quest.

He had a thorough knowledge of Karnatic music and was also a great poet. His poetic outpourings in Sanskrit have been published in two volumes under the title "Gururaja Suktis Malai". His magnum opus was his commentary in Sanskrit on Viveka Choodamani of Adi Sankara.

A Jnani’s ways are often inscrutable, little wonder, therefore, that the Chief Administrator of the Math, Srikanta Sastri in spite of his erudition in the Sastras could not understand the actions of Mahaswami when they were not in consonance with his expectations of how the head of a great Math should conduct himself. The author has given a poigniant account of the hardships caused to the Mahaswami on this score. One is reminded of the parallel in Sri Ramakrishna’s life - how he was labelled as a “mad priest” by ignorant people who could not understand his moods of divine intoxication and ecstasy.

The Mahaswami preferred very often to retire into himself and was lost in communion with the Absolute. On 26th September, 1954, he got up very early even before break of dawn, walked coolly into the stream of the river Ganga and shuffled off his mortal coil. There were no signs of drowning or suffocation and this baffled all doctors and others.

Sri Natarajan’s absorbing account of the Sage is a labour of love and is suffused with devotional fervour. The Sage was truly an Avatara Purusha whose advent was for the uplift of mankind. The narrative details the biography, inspiring teachings and very interesting reminiscences of several devotees. The Mahaswami laid great stress on the need for Vichara. “The first and foremost requirement is for ‘Vichara’ or enquiry ‘Who am I? Who am I? All must have this Vichara at all times’ (p 147).

The work has been blessed by the present Head of the Math, Sri Bharati Tirtha Swami who has contributed a snmukham. Though the quality of paper and printing is very good, the book at Rs. 95 may not be within the easy reach of the common man.

— V.R.K. Raman


This is a rapid survey of the philosophic thought of the world over the centuries as embodied in the Western, Chinese and Indian traditions. Besides presenting ideas central to the traditions with clarity the author has made a special effort to project the inward and outward-looking tendencies - basic in man - which these (traditions) reflect.

The development of Western philosophy is as interesting as it is complex. The cosmological speculations of the earliest Greek philosophers, the mathematical approach to reality by Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, the theory of atomism of Democritus on the constitution of the world,
In the post-Aristotelian period the efforts of Philo as well as Plotinus towards effecting a fusion of Greek and Jewish thought are an important contribution. The medieval period is marked by efforts of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas towards reconciling the doctrines of the Christian gospels with those of Plato and Aristotle. In the modern period the work of Descartes towards reviving the spirit of rationalism has been carried on farther by Spinoza and Leibniz. Bacon, Locke, Berkeley and Hume represent the empiricist school, and the synthesis between this (empiricist) and rationalistic approaches has been achieved by Kant. In recent times a number of schools have come up which are not only close to each other but can also be regarded as variants of earlier ones.

In the Chinese tradition the concentration is on man and his welfare. Confucius the principal figure did not formulate any metaphysical or religious doctrine. He was for performing time-honoured rituals and rites. He advocated cultivation of the qualities of goodness, love, human-heartedness and benevolence. Taoism, a dominant force in China advocates non-action (wu wei) as the guiding principle in life. It means that man, by surrendering to, or identifying himself with the Tao, or the Absolute, will allow the Tao to work through him. "By doing nothing, the sage accomplishes everything." Other important schools of thought are the Mohists, the legalists and that of Mencius. Buddhism, introduced in China by about the first century A.D. had its own metaphysics. However, China understood Buddhism in the light of Taoist doctrines. It did not absorb it in its original form. The author indicates how there was interaction between Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist trends of thought in China, and how it retained intact its interest in man, human nature, and social and political thought.

The development of Indian philosophy has not been complex. The schools have grown independently of each other and almost simultaneously. Vedanta is the cream of it all. But there are other prominent schools as well: the caravaka which represents thorough-going materialism; Jainism which enjoins rigid asceticism and accepts that the soul is originally perfect; Buddhist with a clear spiritual orientation, regarding nirvana as the ideal; nyaya with a highly developed logical system; vaiseshika with an elaborate metaphysical system supplementing the nyaya and serving its purpose better; the sankhya which postulates the plurality of selves; yoga with its technique of meditation leading to samadhi; and mimamsa which means an inquiry into the meaning of the Vedas and also implies the strict observance of the rituals prescribed therein. On the lines of a statement of Prof. Whitehead on Western philosophy the author remarks that "it may be said that Indian philosophy is a series of footnotes to the Vedas and the Upanishads." This gives a vital clue to the understanding of Indian philosophy in general.

The author is of the view that comparative philosophy does not mean a mere comparison of the different histories or cultures. It rather means a study of the different philosophical traditions. This will bring out the particular values held important by the different traditions and how these have been useful in solving the problems of life and philosophy.

We can see that Western philosophy is essentially rationalistic in approach, a result of its Greek origin. In the medieval period this underwent a change when faith gained ascendance over reason. However the growth of science and technology have again tilted the balance in favour of reason. On the whole there is lack of balance between reason and faith. Philosophy is more for intellectual pleasure, than for any spiritual purpose. There is richness and variety of thought but there is no continuity of interest in anything specific and the outlook has been subject to change.

In the Chinese tradition the accent on man, society and the state has apparently stifled the development of metaphysics. The lack of method and analysis is patent. The concept of salvation is totally absent.

Indian philosophy has always stuck to its spiritual tradition and its unique contribution is the presentation of a clear concept of atman. Philosophy and religion are closely integrated and salvation is clearly held out as the ideal. The sustained interest in spirituality is in sharp contrast to the Western position, and of course, the Chinese also.

The author’s clear presentation along with supplementary material is a immense help in understanding the traditions individually and also in arriving at a comparative evaluation. The volume should prove useful to general readers and regular students alike.

—Ramaman


Why are people writing books on Quantum Mechanics (QM) for those uninitiated even in Classical Physics? Before one can find an answer to this there comes another spate of such books which try to be on the lines of Hawking or Feynman. Robert Gilmore’s allegory is one such. As a narrative describing one subject under the guise of another this book, Gilmore informs us, “follows more in the footsteps of Gulliver than of Alice. The Quantum land in which Alice travels is rather like a theme park with Alice sometimes an observer and sometimes a particle” Much of the story is pure fiction and the characters are imaginary based as they are on Carroll’s story. The sketches, a delightful John Tennial takeoff, are all signed RG, presumably the author himself. Those unacquainted with Carroll’s Alice would do well to read that first, the more to enjoy the allegory.

Throughout the book are given boxed notes on QM.
There are also longer end-of-chapter notes for the trickier plots in the text. It is not clear however as to whom the notes are targeted at. There are notes explaining potential and kinetic energies, which makes it very tiresome at times for a reader with some background. On the other hand the author freely uses terms like amplitude and frequency without proper definition which can make it all too profound for the layman. By and large I did find the explanations popping up at the right spots — whenever I started to feel that the little knowledge I had of QM was in danger of corruption by Alice.

The book is so structured that it leads the reader through a concentric course of deepening theory. Unless one is into Greek and Latin one is ill advised to read the chapters ad hoc. Usually authors aiming to simplify the complicated Quantum theory get carried away leading a trusting reader to a mystifying mishmash which passes off for the mystic whole. Mr. Gilmore checks himself at every stage so as to leave the reader asking for more. He brings out the differences between the Classical and Quantum approaches clearly. Heisenberg's Uncertainty principle, Pauli's Exclusion principle, Fermi-Bose particle relationships are all covered lucidly to that limit which can be managed without formulae and equations. The pieces on Schrödinger's Cat, which try to illustrate the phenomenon of tunnelling and matter-energy reversibility are amusing. There are passages all over which make one wonder why text books are not written this way. The final chapter on the EPR paradox is brilliant and is a must for all teachers who are students of physics.

Niels Bohr the father of QM, in his early days is said to have remarked that anyone who did not feel dizzy when thinking about QM had not understood it. The ‘real world’ of Quantum Mechanics, like Alice’s imagined one, does seem nonsensical and quite at variance with common-sense. Are we seriously expected to believe that it is true? Amazingly we find that we must. The theory has held out well so far. “It is the only approach to that limit which can be managed without formulae and equations.”

There is a constant reminder to achieve Purusharthra (human goal) without frittering away the gift of human life. Swamijwarns the listeners against a lackadaisical approach or mere intellectual appreciation of Vedants. The stress is on learning the spiritual literature to strengthen conviction and thereby to live a life of spirit. In other words, the sadhana has to be constantly in tune with the infinite, amidst his activities. There are many useful hints in sadhana. Swamiji’s theories are lucid and simple. A very useful introduction for the seeker.

— N. Panchapakesan

WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER? by J.P. Vaswani

The Divine Life Society, established by Swami Sivananda, has released this volume on the 75th birthday of Swami Chidananda. The book is so structured that it leads the reader through a concentric course of deepening theory. Unless one is into Greek and Latin one is ill advised to read the chapters ad hoc. Usually authors aiming to simplify the complicated Quantum theory get carried away leading a trusting reader to a mystifying mishmash which passes off for the mystic whole. Mr. Gilmore checks himself at every stage so as to leave the reader asking for more. He brings out the differences between the Classical and Quantum approaches clearly. Heisenberg’s Uncertainty principle, Pauli’s Exclusion principle, Fermi-Bose particle relationships are all covered lucidly to that limit which can be managed without formulae and equations. The pieces on Schrödinger’s Cat, which try to illustrate the phenomenon of tunnelling and matter-energy reversibility are amusing. There are passages all over which make one wonder why text books are not written this way. The final chapter on the EPR paradox is brilliant and is a must for all teachers who are students of physics.

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— Amdin Ramanan


The Divine Life Society, established by Swami Sivananda, has released this volume on the 75th birthday of Swami Chidananda. Fittingly, this book contains 75 lectures delivered by Swami Chidananda. The ashram, conducts an early morning meeting where the devotees gather to chant prayers and do meditation at the end of which a brief message is given to the gathering.

The topics, chosen spontaneously, concern themselves with brahma vidya and sadhana. Therefore, it is quite natural, that one may detect some repetition in this book. But the topics are such that any amount of repetition, will never render them stale or uninteresting. Perhaps, as a part of sadhana, one has to do sravanas (keen listening) on such subjects, so that the mind gets anchored in conviction, which in tum, will enhance the intensity of sadhana.

Swami Chidananda conveys to the listener, the essential truths, supported by spiritual texts like Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and other Vedantic texts. The rendering is such that it will impel the interested seeker to pursue the subject further.

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WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER? by J.P. Vaswani


Even those who are not in whole-hearted agreement with Dada J.P. Vaswani’s philosophical stance on many vital issues of life would readily concede that his talks and writings have one outstanding quality: they have a gripping narrative power and an alluring simplicity of narration.

The book under review of just 111 pages is a beautifully illustrated choice selection of his lectures and articles on the one unresolved question that still stirs humanity in the face: Why do good people suffer? The author narrates in winsome style instance after instance drawn from real life of good people subjected to unspeakable suffering for no fault or foible that could be imputed to them in their present life.

So Vaswani goes back to the good old theory of Karma, of cause and effect which is so much a part of Hindu Philosophy and which his Guru, Sadhu Vaswani referred to as "the law of the seed." "As you sow, so shall you reap." The crux of the problem however, is that one reaps in this life the effects of the evil one had committed in a previous life or lives. And why did one do evil in a previous life? The answer, according to the author, is that Man is not merely subjected to the inexorable law of cause and effect but he is also endowed by God with free will to choose between Good and Evil at any point in the evolutionary cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

In J.B. Priestley’s famous play: “I have been here before”, the key character, R. Gortier makes two profound observations:

(1) “We repeat our lives, with some differences, over and over again” and (2) when asked ‘We can make our own lives can’t we?’ Gortier replies “Once we know, yes. It is knowledge alone that gives us freedom. I believe that the very grooves in which our lives run are created by our feeling, imagination and will. If we know and then make the effort, we can change our lives. If I have more knowledge than you, then I can intervene.”

Vaswani, in the footsteps of Ramana Maharshi, and Dr. Gortier in the play, is of the firm conviction that it is such knowledge (Gnana) and intervention (which appears to be a
pure act of Grace) that can alone provide an answer to the yet unresolved question: "Why do good people suffer?"

And what of Fate? Even Ramana Maharshi would not give a definitive answer. The Oxford Dictionary defines Fate as "the Power pre-determining events unalterably from eternity." Vaswani also skirts the question and for those of us who hold the view that our present life is the only life we know, the dictionary definition settles it for us. Just bear it.

S. Jayaram


This book is a detailed account in anthroposophic terms by its founder, of the triad: the physical, the soul and the spirit of man; of reincarnation, and an elaborate description of the cosmology involved with the above mentioned triad, especially in regard to the soul's journey after physical death. Steiner's presentation is almost matter of fact and without recourse to any other authority outside his own experience.

Steiner is a genuine occultist in the western tradition. His treatise demands of its reader a commitment to the vision he pictures for it to be worthwhile reading. The genius of Steiner is that he had applied his considerable intelligence and unwavering dedication to the knowledge at hand late last century and extracted by scientific rigour the essentials for a comprehensive world view of man's place in the universe both in the external and internal planes. No one can doubt the purity of his intentions by just one look at a photograph of him.

Steiner's writing in the original German tend to accentuate his prolix style. Fortunately this translation is the result of a concise skill which has simplified into a smooth flow Steiner's at times verbose prose. It is pleasing to read.

One needs to be careful in reading such people as Steiner authentic though they be. His terminology is unique (as it should be in a Master of this science) and it calls from the reader an obligation to enter the spirit of his enquiry. It requires the acumen of a Ken Wilber if one does not belong to his school for any reasonable understanding to arise, as his descriptions can easily become confusing. For example, he outlines seven layers in a whole man: physical body, ether or life body, sentient body, intellectual soul etc. This is all very well but actually what does it all mean? To answer that you would have to take Steiner's whole philosophy on board.

For those who adhere to the vision of Vedanta they, can do no better, in this particular field than Rene Guenon's Man and His Becoming According to Vedanta.

— Peter Picqalmann


Language is the only means of communication available to us. And language means words, concepts, labels, 'Names'. When one uses names one automatically limits experience, thus changing its texture, perhaps even altering it totally. This is the reason for the seer's wariness about words.

In his book, Ram Swarup does not ignore the possible havoc that words may wreak. However, he goes on to clarify that words in themselves are pure, they represent the essential experience. Neither do they break up experience, nor do they create boundaries. On the other hand, they form a universal basis of experience by weaving a subtle, yet strong web of inter-connectedness. Through words human experience gets translated into animal and even inanimate reams and vice-versa. "A word exists simultaneously at several levels, the physical, the psychological, the moral, the spiritual. It is a meeting point of all of them. 'We may call a man 'stony', a look 'glassy', or talk of water 'laughing' as it 'dances' downstream, or a brook 'singing', similarly, one may be 'foxy', while a fox may be called 'calculating' and 'cunning' in human fashion. Words lose their inter-relatedness, their harmony and begin to be abrasive and divisive not because of what they are but because the mind changes their nature by superimposing its own qualities on them. It may make words 'tarnished' by stereotyping, transforming them into cliches, dullening them so that they are no longer fresh and alive. They lose their meaning and remain merely as shells. Else, words may be seasoned with 'rajas' and used for self-promotion, for aggression, for pampering and promoting the ego. Here words may live, yet they are bound to divide. Because, when the ego's supremacy is to be established, all else must be negated. Words may delude even at the 'sattvic' level by simulating the experience of highest truths so well that one may get lost in them and fail to seek the essence which they represent.

However, Ram Swarup points out that words in their pure form would lead to the supreme truth. One remembers Bhagavan Ramana's statement that when the mind becomes pure through self-attention it ceases to be the 'mind' — it becomes a clear reflection of the Self. Even so, Ram Swarup clarifies that when attention is turned wholly on a word it returns to its pure form and then reveals the Truth that it symbolises. If that word be a Name of God then attention bestowed on it reveals all those qualities. Ram Swarup goes on to establish that all words in essence are names of Gods in their universal nature. By materialising words, by treating them as limited we have made life material and limited, exploitative and bestial. Yet, it is not too late, we can reverse the process by dwelling on the Names of Gods which represent all that is beautiful, pure, full, and blissful. By meditating on those Names we would invoke those qualities in ourselves and be transformed.

The book is eminently readable, written in simple English with clear, marvelously accessible logic, taking one step by step by step surely towards the idea presented. The print too is easy on the eye. Most important, the book reawakens attention to one of the most important areas of our lives — 'words', which form a part of all our conscious experience in thoughts and their expressions. Finally, it highlights the need for awareness — for alertness in the use of words which alone can lead to their essential experience. The need to turn
attention back from the connotation and thence deeper to the source, to make the 'Ganges flow upwards'.

— Dr. Sarada


The Upanishads unfold highly perceptive reflections on human existence and cosmos. Their message is a magnificent vision which raises human consciousness to sublime heights. One of the ten major Upanishads, the Brhadaranyakya delivers rare pearls of wisdom. The commentator Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati is a well known poet, philosopher, mystic, psychologist and author. He is one of the leading exponents of Indian philosophic tradition today. In him the Orient and the Occident coalesce. He lends special emphasis in the fields of psychology, sociology, biology, and psycho-chemistry. His knowledge of all these is patent in every page of the work. He is in the spiritual hierarchy of Sri Narayana Guru.

There are three Kandas in the Upanishad: Madhu Kanda, Muni Kanda, and Khila Kanda. The present volume contains the commentary on the first two chapters of the Madhu Kanda. Philosophy east and west, science, art and literature are all drawn into the author’s focus. His approach and understanding are amazing at several places. Each of the 435 mantras is dealt with in its poetic charm, myth and metaphor, image and symbol. The Yati recreates and expands the Upanishadic vision. The commentary is sure to make an enduring appeal for both scholars and discerning readers. Every statement is substantiated by first hand intuitive intimations of truth gained through incessant meditation, says the author.

A close study of the work will reveal that three transformations are instructed in the Upanishad: (i) the psycho-semantic transformation, by which the spirit transforms into idea, and the idea is symbolized both in oral and figurative expression, (ii) the transformation from the psychophysical world to the intuitive and brilliant speculation, and (iii) the transformation from the darkness of samsara to the dawn of wisdom.

The same is expressed in the immortal lines of the Upanishad:

asato ma sadgamaya,
tamaso ma jyotirgamaya,
murtiyogam amritam gamaya

This commentary brings a modern, scientific viewpoint to the ancient treasury of wisdom.

A book for sravana, manana and deep contemplation.

— Dr. T.N. Pranatharthi Haran

AGHORA : At the left Hand of God, pp. 327, Rs.95—KUNDALINI : Aghora II, pp. 319, Rs.95

The first book is about the story of the Aghori Vimalananda' and his teachings in his own words recorded by Robert Svoboda the author, also claimed to be his Spiritual son. The author's long and hard search among the esoteric lore brought him in contact with his teacher Vimalananda and it took him over a period of eight years to receive his training. The word aghora, (non-terrible) means 'deeper than deep'. An Aghori who practises this advanced discipline cannot afford to make any distinctions between a funeral pyre or a sacrificial fire. The practitioner when he becomes more materialistic and less spiritual, as a rule, loses the divine powers endowed by the Mother Goddess Kundalini. His person becomes that of Smashan Tara, according to one tenet of Aghora in which death is to be personified and defiled, whereas his body is only a shell, as it were, a functionary that carries out the beneficent urges of the Goddess. The author recalls his teacher’s greatness as follows: “Vimalananda equated ego, the individual power of self-identification, with the much misunderstood Shakti. His control of Kundalini enabled him to disengage his consciousness from his own limited personality so that he could self-identify with unlimited, divine personalities.”

Vimalananda is strong on personal purity and builds up an explanation in contrast to the vulgar and debased Tantric forms which equate sex with super consciousness. He argues against gratification of desires, of food, sex and sleep. “Desire is the cause of karma, and when desire is destroyed memory too will go, and you will be free. This is why Shiva is called smarahara (meaning Destroyer of Lust as well as destroyer of Memory)... smashan is where you are transformed from existence into memory. Whether anyone agrees with him or not, he is putting the spotlight on the sanctity of sadhana. To Vimalananda smashan sadhana is the best of all sadhanas. ‘The longer you sit in the smashan, the more you learn about death, which will teach you about life. Some of the things you see there are heart-breaking, but you must go beyond them.’ The author probes deep into the mystique of Vimalananda: his first glimpse of smashan tara, encounter with Telang Swami along with the myriad other anecdotes, his life as a sadhu and premonition of death are all dramatically recounted in this book.

AGHORA II continues with excerpts from Vimalananda’s Teachings through a series of enlightening conversations between the Master and his Disciple. The questioning provoked by Svoboda’s doubts varies from Brahmasutras to Freudian Ego to the much misunderstood practice of sexual Tantra. Vimalananda has throughout stressed the importance of considering the esoteric meaning of puranas. He considers the blessings of Ganesh (Matanga) as essential for Kundalini to be able to leave the Muladhara Chakra. Matangi is well known to the Saktas as one of the ten forms of the Mother.

Just how the story of Ganesh’s birth ties up with the awakening process of Kundalini becomes clear when he explains that Parvati is the Kundalini Shakti as ‘She who is born from the mountains’ representing the spinal cord.
Ganesha was created from the dirt on her body the Earth Element, the Elephant associated with the Muladhara Chakra. Shiva the individual consciousness tries to breakthrough to the dormant Kundalini by force, but this threatens to be the end of the sadhaka because the Muladhara Chakra is the "root support" of the body. When Shiva realises this he regenerates the Muladhara with the help of an elephant, a beast known for his intelligence. The mystic-religious path is explained through the system of Nadis and Chakras in the light of modern science. Skeptics, however, continue to view this Tantric form of yoga with jaundiced eyes. Vinsataturanga points out Aghora as the fast, direct way, but it is too difficult for most people. He gives a warning and get wild when he hears about those people in America who claim either to have had their own Kundalini awakened painlessly, or to be awakening the Kundalini of others effortlessly. "If it were so all of America would have merged with the infinite by now".

The book contains accurate definitions of Sanskrit names and sheds significant light on Gayatri Mantra, Ojas, spiritual Panchamakaras, four levels of speech, magical siddhis, performance of Homa and profound states of consciousness. In addition we find separate chapters on Agni, Mantra, Music and the esoteric Ramayana involving comparatively subtle and unusualness of his Master's teachings on Kundalini. Robert Beer's illustrations of the Nath Siddhas adorn the book in Tibetan style.

— R. Ramanami

SRI SADGURU SIDDHARAMESHWAR MAHARAJ'S MASTER KEY TO SELF-REALISATION: by Sri Ranjit Maharaj. Pub: Sri Sadguru Siddharameshwar Adhyatma Kendra, 45 Narayan Building, Dubash lane, V.P. Rd, Bombay 400 004. 1994, pp64, Rs. 50. $10.

This slim volume is an English translation of an expanded version of one of the lectures of Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, a great Marathi guru of the renowned Navnath Sampradaya, and beloved guru of Nisargadatta Maharaj and Ranjit Maharaj of Bombay. The task of translating and publishing the guru's lectures during the period 1925 to 1936 expounding his teaching on the Final Reality via vishammag (the bird's way) is being undertaken by Ranjit Maharaj and his devotees. This is the first of a series to be published in English in order to introduce Siddharameshwar Maharaj's teaching to a wider audience.

To summarize, the basic teaching is to systematically search for and then finally eliminate by the net, net approach the "I" in the four bodies of the gross, subtle, causal and Mahakarana. Through the realization that only the feeling of ownership, that is, 'my and mine' can be found in the first two bodies, but not the owner of the said bodies, that is, the I itself, one rejects these and moves on to investigate the next body, the causal or Karana. This is the body of ignorance, forgetfulness or void. In this space of emptiness one then senses the feeling of the witness which is the fourth body of Mahakarana. This is the I AM principle of Pure knowledge.

The final chapter explains how the knowledge of each body is dependent on the existence of the preceding body. Only the knowledge of the Mahakarana body can stand alone, self sufficient and self luminous. But this state of knowledge (of knowing that one does not have remembrance of anything) comes into being only out of a relationship to pure ignorance (the causal body). So it too ultimately dissolves. Then what remains is the Parabrahman beyond ignorance and knowledge, where the search for the I finally ends. But this transition from the state of Pure knowledge of the fourth body, to the transcendent Parabrahman requires lengthy stabilizing and refining of that state, and for this the recommended remedy is the "saguna type of worship" where one applies the knowledge that the Paramatman pervades all, by worshipping all in one's daily life. Thus 'dry knowledge gets moistened with devotion' and one gets "the bliss of liberation".

The book's simple language and informal style belie the complex and subtle substance which cannot be dealt with casually but must be thoughtfully considered. However by the use of imaginative and colourful examples to illustrate these difficult concepts Siddharameshwar Maharaj often brings the point home in a very incisive manner. Devotees of Nisargadatta Maharaj especially will find it interesting to see how the lineage teachings develop in their unique way with each teacher, but at the same time maintaining the essential purity. In spite of the inadequacies of the translation (clumsy syntax, spelling and punctuation errors) which often can make the reading less than fluid, the voice of an authentic and original master resounds brilliantly.

— Priscilla Gong

BOOKS RECEIVED

SRI RAMANA GITA (Polish): by Jaroslav Belles. 'Agnihotra' ul poznanska 84/7, 87-100 Torun, Poland.

SRI RAMANA PAAMAALAI (Tamil): Carnatic musical compositions on Bhagavan: by Mahalakshmi Suryanandar. pp91, Rs. 20. All proceeds go to Ramana Kendra, N.Delhi 110 003.


PREMA DHARA: a collection of letters from Sri Sathya Sai Baba to his students comp. by J. Venkatraman. pp72. ph:080-6634074


Celebration of 116th Jayanti of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

At Ashram (6-1-96)

The celebrations at the Ashram were organised on the usual lines. The Ramana Auditorium, decorated with flowers on a massive scale, wore a distinctively festive look.

The Ramananjali group, Bangalore, gave a concert of devotional music the previous evening. The programme was well conceived, and the rendering very impressive.

Group singing of Tamil hymns on Sri Bhagavan by devotees in the early hours of Jayanti day marked the commencement of the celebrations. This was followed by the first puja (milk offering) to Sri Bhagavan and breakfast at seven, as per daily routine.

The next item in the programme was chanting of Maha Narayana Upanishad, which commenced at eight. After elaborate abhishekam, the Ramanaeswara Mahalingam was specially decorated with choice garlands and puja was performed. Aarti came off at eleven, which was followed by feasting of devotees and visitors, as usual. The poor were fed on a large scale.

The rendering of devotional songs in the afternoon by the Amritavarshini group, Bangalore, led by Smt. Sakkubai Srinivasan was very much appreciated by devotees.

At New York

Jayanti was celebrated at Arunachala Ashrama on Yellowstone Boulevard in Queens, New York, on 6-1-96.

The programme consisted of group singing of Aksharamanamalai of Sri Bhagavan, reading of the story of Sri Bhagavan’s birth from Arthur Osborne’s Ramana Maharshi and the path of Self Knowledge, puja and bhajan by Swami Prakashmayananda of Sri Lanka. The Swami as well as other devotees spoke on the occasion.

At Delhi

Jayanti was celebrated by the Ramana Kendra, Delhi with floral offering to Sri Bhagavan and Veda parayanam on the 6th January. A public meeting arranged on February 18 (as part of the celebrations) was addressed by Sri J.A.Kalyanakrishnan, former Home Secretary, Government of India. He spoke on the life and teaching of Sri Bhagavan. There was also a music concert by Vijayalakshmi and party.

At Tadpatri

Jayanti was celebrated for three days between 4th and 6th January at Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram, Tadpatri.

The programmes consisted of speeches, a musical concert and also a dance performance. On Jayanti day a large number of guests were treated to lunch.

Essay / Quiz Competition on the Life and Teachings of Sri Bhagavan

An essay and quiz competition for students on the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan was organised for the third year in succession jointly by the Ashram and Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore. Nearly 1,500 students belonging to eight schools of Tiruvannamalai participated in the contest. The prize distribution function was held at the Ashram on 4-1-96. The Ashram President Shri V.S. Ramanan, Sri A.R. Natarajan and Dr. Sarada spoke on the occasion. Sri R. Natarajan, Retired Headmaster took an active part in conducting the contest.
Kumbhabhishekam (Consecration) of Sri Adi Arunachaleswara Temple, Adi Annamalai (5-2-96 to 9-2-96)

There are two major temples dedicated to Lord Siva at Tiruvannamalai. One is the Arunachaleswara Temple on the eastern side of the Hill, housing the sacred swayambu linga (self-created). The other on the far side (western side) of the Hill is the Adi Arunachaleswara Temple, established by Brahma. This is situated at Adi Annamalai village.

Kumbhabhishekam to the Adi Arunachaleswara Temple was performed on February 9 in the presence of thousands of devotees. It was actually a five-day long function, the rituals preliminary to the final consecration having commenced even on February 5.

The entire credit for organising the Kumbhabhishekam goes to Swami Ramanananda Saraswati who lives at Varuna Lingarri (Near Adi Annamalai Village). This temple was last consecrated in 1967. However no renovation work had been undertaken since 1918.

It is noteworthy that this huge project was conceived, organised and successfully completed through the energetic efforts of a single person—Swami Ramanananda. He has earned the gratitude of all devotees of Lord Arunachaleswara. The cost of the entire work (renovation and consecration) was Rs.25 lakhs approximately.

Volunteers from the Ashram provided assistance to Swami Ramanananda on all the five days.

His Holiness Sri Jayendra Sarasvati Swami, Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitam graced the function with his presence on February 7.

Sri Vidya Havan at Ashram

This annual function which forms part of the worship of Sri Chakra Meru at the Mother's Shrine in the Ashram was

Celebration of the 46th anniversary of Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan

The celebration of the 46th Aradhana of Sri Bhagavan on 15th April at the ashram was on the usual lines. In general the programmes on Aradhana Day are identical with those on Jayanti day, except in the choice of hymns for the group singing in the morning.

On the evening of the 14th there was a delightful Villupattu performance by the students of Sri Ramana Vidyabhavan School, Tendral Nagar, Vengikal, Tiruvannamalai. The children (most of them below ten) gave a thrilling rendering of songs in folklore style, describing the main events in the life of Sri Bhagavan.

After dinner Srimati Ambika Kameshwar gave a ren-
celebrated on March 22. The elaborate rituals took about ten hours to complete.

_Purnahuti_, the thrilling finale came off at about four in the afternoon; this was witnessed by a large number of devotees.

**Mahapuja**

Mahapuja which commemorates the Liberation of the Mother by the direct touch of Sri Bhagavan comes off on Vaisakha Bahula Navami according to the Hindu calendar. This year Mahapuja was celebrated in the customary manner on June 9.

**Talks by Dwaraknath Reddy at Ashram**

Sri V. Dwaraknath Reddy, a long-standing devotee of Sri Bhagavan and resident of Ramana Nagar, gave three talks on the subject ‘Can death be killed?’ at the Ashram New Hall, on the 27th, 28th and 29th December 1995. These talks were very much appreciated by devotees.

**Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**

dering of Ramana music in classical Carnatic style. The performance was very impressive.

A colourful function was got up on Aradhana day at the Ramana Auditorium during which an audio cassette entitled _Ramana Malai_ was released. The lyrics for all the nine songs contained in the cassette have been composed and also set to music by the famous singer and music director, Dr. Ilaya Raja. They are full of devotional fervour. The function was attended by a large gathering of devotees and visitors.

The audience was thrilled to hear Dr. Ilaya Raja singing to the accompaniment of his own music recorded on the cassette. Srimathi P. Sushila, noted playback singer also accompanied him in the singing.

_Release of Sri Ramana Smarana_ (by Dr. A.S. Venugopala Rao), printed by Sri Shadakshari: Presentation of copy to Srimathi Shadakshari

**Bhagavan Ramana on the Internet**

Graham Boyd has created two home pages for Bhagavan on the World Wide Web.

For North America:

http://www.ccacyber.com/bdirect/ramana

For Europe:

http://204.174.58.33/~amber/maharshi/graham/

They can be accessed by any World Wide Web browser, preferably NETSCAPE. The pages include book lists, photographs, _The Maharshi_ newsletter, some details about various groups, addresses and e-mail contacts, information on the two Bhagavan videos, plus some input from devotees and advice. To be included later are addresses of Ramana groups around the world as well as excerpts from Ashram books.
Publication of Rare Works in Tamil by the Ashram

While giving spiritual instructions or clearing devotees' doubts certain books were often referred to or commended for study by Sri Bhagavan. They are mentioned below. These are now rare to find, being virtually out of print. It is necessary that the message in these books is not lost to posterity.

For the reason that devotees and seekers may not otherwise have the opportunity of acquiring these books, the Ashram itself proposes to publish them. It is noteworthy that most of those who wrote the paraphrase (for these works) were themselves admirers of Sri Bhagavan and also visited him often.

This is a major project and would cost Rs. 5 Lakhs, on a rough estimate. Hence it may take a year or two for actual completion, depending upon the availability of funds.

List of Books

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FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

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<td>TAMIL NEW YEAR'S DAY</td>
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Obituary

Krishna Swamy

Sri Krishna Swamy, an old devotee who came to Sri Bhagavan in the early '30s is no more. He was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of the Master in the early hours of March 6. Sri Krishna Swamy was over ninety.

Although he was not expressive about it, he was a staunch devotee who revered Sri Bhagavan, especially for his personal simplicity and concern for the poor.

On account of his stern ways and blunt speaking— which were reflected in his monitoring of visitors into the Old Hall of Sri Bhagavan—he was jocularly referred to as the ‘Hall Sarvadhikari’, in the earlier years.

He left the Ashram after the Maha Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan and lived in Pala Kottu. Subsequently he returned to the Ashram and remained as a regular inmate till the last.

Brihadambal

Srimathi Brihadambal, popularly known as Ramanathapuram Patti (Granny from Ramanathapuram) attained the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on January 13. The end came in the early hours of that day.

Even her first visit to Sri Bhagavan (in 1929) proved decisive. She became his staunch devotee. She felt deeply disturbed at the very thought of return to her native place. But Sri Bhagavan put her at ease, saying “Why do you worry? Where are you going? Why do you think that place is different from this? Think that Bhagavan is there also and everything will be all right.”

She repeated her visits to the Ashram, but came to Tiruvannamalai for good only in the 1950’s. She did personal service to Muruganar for years, with rare dedication. Such personal service included making regular copies of his jottings on loose bits of paper, and preserving them in a suitable manner for publication. This service of hers has indeed proved invaluable.

She made herself useful to the Ashram in many ways. She used to clean the vessels in the shrine, light lamps and ring the bell during puja. Patti was also a helper in the Ashram kitchen.

The Ashram will remember her for years as a humble, genial, and service-minded devotee.

R. Chandrasekhar

(1922-96)

Sri Chandrasekhar who worked in the packing section of the Ashram Book Depot was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of the Master on the evening of January 16.

His father, Sri K. Ramachandra of Colombo (Editor of The Religious Digest), was a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan. It was in his company that Chandrasekhar came to the Ashram for the first time in 1940.

Chandrasekhar was unfortunately mute, but could communicate with others effectively in sign language. He was always brisk and an expert in his allotted work of packing books. Besides this he had also a formal industrial school certificate in printing technology.

At the time of his death he had spent more than 30 years at the Ashram as a regular inmate.

Srimathi Janaki Nambiar

(1911 -1995)

Srimathi Janaki Nambiar, wife of Sri K.K. Nambiar—a well known devotee and former President of Ramana Kendra, Madras—passed away on the 9th December 1995, after a brief illness.

Religiously inclined from her earliest years she had the good fortune of having darsan of Sri Bhagavan in the early '30s in the company of her husband. She was a great support to him in all his religious activities.

Sri Nambiar, while working in Tirunelveli as District Board Engineer, fervently prayed to Sri Bhagavan to give him opportunities for more frequent darsans. His prayer was answered and in a miraculous manner he was transferred to Tiruvannamalai itself! The Nambiars thus had the opportunity of having darsan of Sri Bhagavan almost daily.

Both of them became staunch devotees. Subsequently Sri Nambiar had to move to other places in the course of his official career. However the Nambiars were steady visitors to the Ashram.

In her own quiet way Srimathi Nambiar influenced the children and instilled religious belief in them.

Particularly in her last days she was keen on reading Sri Bhagavan’s works constantly, or, alternatively, listening to such recitals by others.

May her soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!

C.G. Balasubramanian

Sri C.G. Balasubramanian was born on 18th September 1922 in Kerala. After a distinguished academic career he joined the Meteorological Department at Poona in 1942. He was subsequently transferred to Delhi in 1962.
He came under the influence of Sri Bhagavan in 1963 and was associated with the Ramana Kendra activities under the guidance of Professor K. Swaminathan. After his retirement from service in 1980, he took over as the resident member of the Ramana Kendra and continued to serve the institution in various capacities — endearing himself to everyone who came into contact with him. His devotion and selfless service earned him the goodwill of all the members.

He passed away on 23 December 1995 at a Delhi Nursing Home after a brief heart ailment.

He now rests in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!

Miss Sashikala

Miss Sashikala, President of Sri Bharatiya Samskritika Vidyapeeth Trust, passed away on January 9 at Hyderabad after a brief illness.

Miss Sashikala was of a religious bent of mind from her childhood, having been strongly influenced by her mother Rani J. Lalitha Devi. The mother was constantly in the company of saints like Swami Sivananda, Swami Ramdas, Mother Krishna Bai, Swami Chidananda and Swami Satchidananda.

Besides engaging herself in charitable activities in the course of her official work at the Trust, she also made heavy donations in her individual capacity to religious institutions. Our Ashram has also received handsome donations from Miss Sashikala.

May her soul rest in peace!

Lex Hixon

Readers have expressed deep appreciation of two articles by Lex Hixon which were published in the Aradhana and Jayanti issues of THE MOUNTAIN PATH for 1995.

It is with deep regret that we report his death on November 1, 1995 (All Soul’s Day) at New York. He was 53.

A scholar in the mystical traditions of the major religions of the world, Lex Hixon was specially interested in Vedantic studies. In particular he was influenced by the teachings of Sri RamaKrishna and Sarada Devi.

Besides being the author of seven books he had also conducted classes on religion at many centres. His first book, *Coming Home: The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions* deserves special mention. This has been republished recently.

May his soul rest in peace!

John Flynn

John Flynn was some kind of father-figure to Dennis Hartel and others of Arunachala Ashrama. Ever since his first visit to the Arunachala Ashrama in Nova Scotia in 1982, he was a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan. To him the master was a living presence.

It was his ambition to visit the Ashram. This was fulfilled in 1989. When asked (during the visit) whether he was all right, he replied, “Yes, for perhaps the first time I am really all right. And now I know why I had to come here.”

John Flynn was suffering from cancer for quite some time. He passed away on January 1, at Frederick, Maryland.

May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!

Celebration of Centenary of Sri Bhagavan’s Advent at Arunachala

The centenary will be celebrated at the Ashram on the 31st August and 1st September, 1996. The invitation to devotees will carry the details.

Ramana devotees’ groups have organised a celebration at Madras on the 15th September, 1996, the highlight of which will be a music concert by Dr. Smt. M.S. SubbaLakshmi.

Statement about ownership and other particulars about THE MOUNTAIN PATH according to Form IV, Rule 8, Circular of the Registrar of Newspapers for India:

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Date: 31.3.96 Signature of the Publisher: (SD) V.S. Ramanan

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