The MOUNTAIN PATH
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Once Sri Bhagavan and some devotees visited this spot to witness a similar scene which occurs only rarely.

He remarked:

The Guru is himself like the sluice and irrigates souls with Grace from his ocean of kindness needed so that the Self may abide and the old tendencies be withered away.

But if the bund is broken, the full force of the whole lake rushes through and sweeps everything before it. This resembles a sadhaka receiving the full force of Divine Consciousness without the intervening and mitigating Grace of Guru's sluice; he dies without the benefit of having the tendencies destroyed.

Photograph by Dev Gogoi
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— Editor.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH is dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
EDITORIAL

Realizing the Ideal

The majority have certain pre-conceived notions. When it comes to the question of ideals the common notion is that they exist only in imagination. That is to say, there is no possibility whatever, of practical realization of ideals. This provides a convenient excuse for those who are easy-going to take life merely as a routine exercise or activity and nothing more. The line of argument is: since the standard of perfection demanded by an ideal life (whatever it may be) is so high, we can never hope to achieve it. Therefore why should we attempt it at all?

The following would summarise such a philosophy of escapistism:

Eat, drink and be merry;
For tomorrow we die.

Death is the end of life;
Ah! Why should life all labour be?

Apparently, therefore, one can raise the question — why should we have an ideal or live up to it at all? What is the harm if we don’t have any?

Swami Vivekananda answers this question:

Unfortunately in this life the vast majority of persons are groping through this dark life without any ideal at all. If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, I am sure that the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand.¹

Hence we should necessarily have an ideal. This would act as the Pole Star and prevent us from moving in the wrong direction.

A life bereft of ostentation and characterised by quietness and ease is taken by some to be the ideal, perfect life.

Alexander Pope says:

Quiet by day,
Sound sleep by night; study and ease Together mix’d; sweet recreation, And innocence, which most does please

With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.²

This is only a vague concept of a desirable state of life. We do not know whether such a life is possible for all. Even if it is, we are not sure whether it will be productive of real happiness. And, we also have to contend with innumerable variants of such conceptions about the ideal life.

We seem to be at sea as far as the question of choosing the right ideal is concerned. Or, rather we seem to be moving towards an ever receding horizon of hope.

However if we go beyond the sphere of the material and the mundane and take lessons from the religious history of the world we can clearly see that man is capable of becoming perfect in the ultimate sense of the word. There is nothing vague or imaginary about such a state of spiritual perfection. It is full of peace, contentment and happiness. This is the ideal to be aimed at.

Belief in the perfectibility of man is a basic requirement in the higher life. Vedanta inculcates in man the aspiration for achieving the ultimate perfection.

Samsara or materialistic existence is based on the phenomena of birth and death. This procession of events appears to be interminable. But it is not so, when truth is apprehended. Shankara says:

When one is past the prime of life where is the craving for sense pleasures? Where is the lake when its waters are dried up? Where is the retinue of (attending) relatives when one’s wealth is exhausted? [Similarly] what is samsara, when the truth is known?³

One may be tempted to think that life in heaven or paradise is the ideal life. This is not so since the soul (which has made no effort to free itself finally from the bonds of karma as per the teaching of the Vedanta) returns, to earth — even after ages — after its merits are exhausted.

When one becomes aware that individuality or individual consciousness has the Universal Consciousness, the Self as its bedrock or substratum, there is the dawn of true knowledge. One should become established through strenuous efforts in that state of true consciousness where all individuality is lost in the transcendent Self. This is the ideal life.

It means the cessation of finite existence. Since one thereby transcends birth and death, one transcends time also.

Mere adoption of an ideal in a formal sense will not do. It does not indemnify one against being overpowered by lower tendencies. Whole-hearted efforts in pursuit of the ideal are necessary.

A song composed by the disciples of Shankaracharya defines the nature of spiritual effort in the following terms:

What pure Brahmans seek so eagerly by repetition of the Vedas, by reli-

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² The Quiet Life.
³ Verse 10, Charpata Panjarika Stotra.
gious gifts, by earnest application of their hard-earned knowledge, and by renunciation, is the Truth, That Thou art!\textsuperscript{4}

Sri Krishna says as follows on the need for intensity in practice:

Out of thousands, perhaps one strives for perfection; out of those who strive, perhaps one knows Me as I am.\textsuperscript{5}

Shankara says:

One does not become a king by merely saying 'I am a king' without destroying one's enemies and obtaining the reality of power. Similarly one does not obtain liberation as Brahman itself by merely repeating the scriptural text 'I am Brahman' without destroying the duality caused by ignorance and directly experiencing the Self...\textsuperscript{5}

Sri Ramakrishna says:

1) The intoxication of the hemp smoker is not to be had by repeating the word 'hemp'. Get the hemp, rub it with water into a solution and drink it, and you will get intoxicated. What is the use of loudly crying, 'O God, O God!' Regularly practise devotion and you shall see God.\textsuperscript{7}

Individual effort towards inner evolution is of primary importance. However there are limitations to such effort. Divine aid also comes into play so as to fortify the earnest attempts of the seeker and render them successful. This is a part of the divine dispensation.

Sri Krishna says:

To those who are self-attuned and who worship Me with loving devotion I give that union with understanding whereby they come to Me.

Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their heart, destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the effulgent light of knowledge.\textsuperscript{8}

The following dialogue between Sri Maharshi and a devotee brings out the extent of solicitude of God for man.

Devotee: Has God or the Guru any solicitude for me?

Maharshi: If you seek either — they are not really two but one and identical — rest assured that they are seeking you with a solicitude greater than you can ever imagine.\textsuperscript{9}

For the devotee persisting with doubts about the grace of God Sri Maharshi gives assurance (of such grace):

Devotee: But one may not be quite sure of God's Grace.

Maharshi: If the unripe mind does not feel His grace, it does not mean that God's grace is absent, for it would imply that God is at times not gracious, that is, ceases to be God.\textsuperscript{10}

The stress on individual effort as well...
as the operation of divine grace seems to imply a contradiction. Since grace essentially means something given gratis it may appear that individual effort is repudiated. The theory of predestination may appear to act as a disincentive to personal effort. One may feel or argue that if everything is predetermined, how can one’s personal efforts make any difference to the situation? Also, the doctrine of Advaita declares that one is Brahman. If one is already Brahman, why make any effort at all to realise Brahman?

Bhagavan Sri Ramana resolves this question about the need for sadhana:

In this connection Bhagavan quoted some verses from the great saint and Tamil poet Tayumanavar, the gist of which is as follows:—

Bliss will ensue if you keep still, but however much you tell your mind this truth, it will not keep still. It is the mind that tells the mind to be still and it will attain bliss, but it will not do it. Though all the scriptures have said it and though we hear it daily from the great ones and even from our Guru, we are never quiet but stray into the world of maya and sense objects. That is why conscious, deliberate effort is needed to attain that effortless state of stillness.¹¹

The need for effort or sadhana to reach the effortless state of absorption in the depths of the Self is made clear by the following dialogue:

Devotee: Then, is it possible to be without effort, without strain?

Maharshi: Not only that, it is impossible to make an effort beyond a certain extent.

Devotee: I want to be further enlightened. Should I try to make no effort at all?

Maharshi: Now it is impossible for you to be without effort. When you go deeper, it is impossible for you to make any effort.¹²

Individual effort and divine grace are therefore complementary and there is no need to discriminate between them or evaluate their efficacy in a comparative sense.

The goal of life is Self-realization, that is God-realization. This state of perfection has been practically attained by sages and saints.

The ideal held aloft by the Vedanta is not a theoretical abstraction. It is a realized ideal.

¹¹ Arthur Osborne, The Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in his own words, p.84 (1960 Edn).
¹² Sat Darshana Bhashya, p.IV. (1946 Edn.).
Kaupina Panchakam
(Five Verses On The Loincloth)

By Shankaracharya

In these verses Shankara gives a moving description of the ideal ascetic. A loincloth is the only garment worn by such an ascetic.

Sri Bhagavan wore nothing more than a loincloth for the best part of his life — that is after his arrival at Arunachala. In the earlier years he begged his food like an ordinary mendicant in the streets of Tiruvannamalai. He also lived in the open for a considerable time exposed to the vagaries of the weather — taking shelter under the trees.

For these reasons the poem can be said to be a literally correct description of the master, and his way of life.

An extract from the Letters of Suri Nagamma, appearing on page 63 would show how Sri Bhagavan was utterly indifferent even to bare physical needs.

1. Blessed indeed are those wearers of the loincloth, who ever take delight in dwelling on the truths of the Vedanta, remain content with food acquired as alms and live in a state of mind free from sorrow.

2. Blessed indeed are those wearers of the loincloth, who choose the shelter of a tree, receive food on their palms and spurn riches as if they were rags.

3. Blessed indeed are those wearers of the loincloth, who having discarded the ‘I am the body’ thought, behold the Supreme Self within (themselves) and remain unaware of such concepts as the end, middle or outside of things.

4. Blessed indeed are those wearers of the loincloth, who remain fully content with the Bliss of the Self within, curb the outward movement of the senses, and immerse themselves day and night in Brahman (Consciousness).

5. Blessed indeed are those wearers of the loincloth, who chant the holy Panchakshara,1 contemplate on Lord Siva in the Heart [for ever] and roam about freely, subsisting on begged food.

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1 The mantra for invocation of Lord Siva (consisting of five letters).
The Significance of Mahapooja

By T.V. Kapali Sastry

The Mahapooja, or the samadhi anniversary of the mother of Sri Ramana Maharshi, is celebrated every year in summer, on the ninth day of the dark half of the solar month Vaikasi, for on that day, came the solemn hour, the final samadhi for the mother. There are two main items in the programme of this annual celebration; one is the feeding of the visitors and the poor on a large scale, the other is the special worship of the lingam that is installed over the masonry work sealing the interred remains of the blessed soul.

Here we may make mention of a few facts suggesting a line of thought that may throw light on the meaning of the samadhi and the worship of the lingam and the general feeding, and may prepare the enquiring mind that has faith in spiritual life and its possibilities for a change in the sense of values. First about feeding. Generally, food is given as a matter of charity, as service of the poor, i.e. as service of God in the poor. When the feeding is associated with a great name, a saint or a religious institution, the religious man who does not believe in this form of charity learns to tolerate it! Now let us see if the feeding in Sri Ramanashram is undertaken as a matter of pity for the poor, or if there is anything else behind actuating this way of charity.

Even on ordinary days, it is difficult for the visitor to return from the Ashram without the impression that the Maharshi evinces keen interest in feeding not only the hungry stomachs, but looks pleased to see that the visitor, whatever his status, avails himself of the opportunity of taking a meal at the Ashram; and this is so, notwithstanding the impersonal character of his dealings with men and things, of his general outlook on life, which is the inevitable expression of the intense deep life of the Truth he is centred in. Those who visit the Ashram frequently or have made a few days' stay, have often testified to the unusual appetite for food they experience which is a special feature of the Ashram atmosphere; and most of the devotees, even

From Collected works of Sri T.V. Kapali Sastry. (Reproduced from The Mountain Path, July, 1987). Mahapooja was observed this year on 30th May.
when they are on flying visits, would not forego the privilege of having a meal at the Ashram as it is consecrated, sanctified by the very air of the Ashram, permeated by the power of the Maharshi.

If these facts are borne in mind, it will be easy to understand the significance of a number of people being daily fed and of larger numbers on special occasions. Indeed the ashramites and devotees of Sri Maharshi take so much interest in such feedings because there is the common belief, a general understanding, that food in the Ashram is prasad in a truer sense of the word, an active symbol of the spiritual gift, a material vehicle of the awakening influence and gracious glance emanating from the presiding spirit — Sri Maharshi.

Let us next turn to the samadhi and the worship of the lingam and look at the question in the light of known facts about the environmental changes in the life of Sri Maharshi before and after his mother came to live with him in 1916. There are good people who are satisfied that the mother of Sri Maharshi was great because she gave birth to a great spiritual figure, and became greater after the close of her earthly life, deserving a place of worship, almost for the same reason. There is nothing essentially wrong in such a notion; for, a genuine faith of this kind is not objectionable and such beliefs of unsophisticated minds have got a value of their own, yielding good results always in the measure of the sincerity behind, governing and determining the course of conduct that is expressive of the conviction.

But such beliefs are no bar to others looking at the question from a different angle.

To make a proper study of the question is to learn as far as possible the attitude of Sri Maharshi towards this samadhi, to know something of the part he has played, to see how far the expressive element in him has been stimulated in this connection.

Looking back to earlier years, we can note certain landmarks in the story of his environmental life that have been the stimuli for drawing him out, to be responsive to those that have sought him for help and guidance. Thus after eleven years of deep and intense mounam (silence in every sense of the word), his long sealed voice opened in 1907 to give instructions to Kavyakantha GanapatI Sastrigal who afterwards became his great disciple. This was indeed the beginning of a new period in which he not only regained gradual control over the vocal chords and power of speech which had been by long disuse, almost lost, but has been to this day answering questions and clearing doubts of earnest seekers and devotees who approach him.

Another period began in 1916 when his mother came to live with him to the end. Within a short period of her advent, culinary arrangements were made, a regular kitchen was started, and visitors and devotees got lodging and boarding. In this period (1916-1922) i.e., the seven closing years of her life, Sri Maharshi began to pay increasing attention to her needs. Gracious and sympathetic, he allowed her to have her share of his love and sympathy. Such was his
spiritual stature that he would not mind the conventional shastra that a saint must keep himself aloof from his relatives. He was preparing her for the supreme consummation, the true samadhi. Apart from the silent spiritual way of helping her to build the inner life, he gave her useful instructions, narrated helpful anecdotes, corrected some of her world-old common notions of religious virtues in bathing and eating, of the kitchen religion, but never coerced her; he always allowed her to have her orthodox way. For instance, he would remark in a jocose style, "O your cloth is touched by somebody, madi is gone, polluted, O religion is gone... Yes, this onion, drumstick,... great obstruction to moksha!"

When the end came, the blessed lady completely resigned herself to the sage, making room for his proximity to be effective. On the last day of her life (May 19, 1922), from morning to about eight in the evening, the great sage sat by the side of the gasping mother, placing his right hand on her heart and the left on her head until life in her body became extinct and the soul got absorbed into the Spirit, into the Peace that passeth all understanding.

Some time after the event, when someone referred to the passing away of his mother, the sage corrected with a curt remark, "No not passed away, adangi vittadhu, adakkam, absorbed". On another occasion, referring to the same subject, he stated, "Yes, in her case it was a success; on a previous occasion, I did the same for Palaniswami when his end was approaching but it was a failure, he opened his eyes and passed away".

Further explaining in part what was happening during those ten or twelve hours when his hands were on the head and heart of his mother, he said: "Innate tendencies, vasanas or subtle memory of past experiences leading to future possibilities, became very active; scenes rolled before her in the subtle consciousness, as the outer sense had already gone; the soul was passing through a series of experiences that might possibly have required many births for her, but for the quickening process worked by the special touch given on the occasion; the soul was at last disrobed of the subtle sheaths before it reached the final destination, the Supreme Peace, Nirvana Samadhi from which there is no return to ignorance".
Utterances to this effect regarding his mother are aphorisms for which a plain commentary is to be found in the general atmosphere and his attitude to the samadhi and the temple constructed after the event. From Skandashram on the hill, he was for about six months daily visiting the samadhi at the foot of the hill where her remains were interred, until one day he suddenly sat and has continued to stay there to this hour! “Not of my own accord I removed from Skandashram . . .” he said, “Something placed me here and I obeyed; it is not due to my will, sveccha, it is pareccha, the will of others or of the Lord”. “Lord I have no will of my own. Thy will is my will” — this is one of the oft-quoted passages of the Maharshi.

What has been so far stated is enough to show how he looks upon this samadhi with which, one may say, commenced a new period in the history of his life and the Ashram. The fact is well known that from 1922 onwards, Sri Ramanashram has been steadily growing, the teachings and the influence of the sage are increasingly recognized and spread; especially in the last few years the name of Sri Ramana Maharshi has touched some of the earnest hearts of Europe and America.

On one occasion Sri Maharshi is said to have remarked, “Where is she gone? She is here”. This was taken to mean that she, his mother, as a liberated spiritual being, lived with him in his atmosphere. If so it may be that the principle of female energy, Shakti, was required to extend and spread the influence of Sri Maharshi and that was supplied by his mother effectively after her samadhi. This need not be discussed further here, as it can be best understood only by students of occult tradition.

The greatness then of Sri Maharshi’s mother rests much more upon other factors than on the fact of her great good luck in having been a good and pious-minded mother of a spiritual personage of a rare type. Her greatness lay in her capacity to receive his help and influence in the closing hours of her life and thereby to shuffle off the subtle coils of mortal inference before she could get liberated into the eternal state of the Supreme Peace. Above all, her worth and greatness are manifest in the increasingly felt influence of the spirit and teachings of the Maharshi, spreading across the shores and entitling her to take the place of the Madonna in the institution of Sri Ramanashram where the Matrubhuteshwara Lingam (the Lord who has taken her into Himself) is installed and offered daily worship.
Self-surrender

By Swami Ramdas

GOD takes His devotee and dissolves him into His all-transcendent and all-splendrous being. The person who has thus surrendered himself to God and feels His presence everywhere, does not see any difference between himself and others. Then how does he live? He is simple and innocent; his love goes to everybody. He is always happy. He takes every situation that comes to him as willed by the Divine. He hates nobody in the world; no condition can upset his mind. He is very cheerful and happy, whether he is having good things or bad things. He is not at all affected because he has no mind as such. If the mind is there, he will feel the reaction in which he is placed from time to time. But his mind is dissolved, merged in God. So in all situations he remains perfectly happy and peaceful. There is no loss or gain for him because he is not concerned with either. Whatever comes to him comes from God and whatever goes from him goes to God. It is just like taking something from one pocket and putting it into another. Both pockets are his. They are in fact God’s pockets. He receives and He gives. So there is no sense of loss or gain. Praise and blame do not affect him. Honour and dishonour do not affect him. He remains ever calm as he has found the Reality within him and he has known that he is the embodiment of that Reality. He knows well that happiness and misery do not depend upon external conditions, the so-called favourable or the unfavourable.

It is said that a man of the world is like a pendulum that moves between a tear and a smile. He depends upon external things for his happiness. When people praise him he is elated. If they blame him he is depressed. But when he has found within himself the eternal source of all happiness — God — and is ever one with Him, he does not mind what the world says. In all situations he is perfectly cheerful. His love too will be flowing out spontaneously towards millions. He and the millions will merge together in the ocean of love. Love is a great purifier. It purifies our heart and it purifies the hearts of others also. We are elevated and raised to a higher plane in which all distinctions are lost.

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GANAPATI SASTRI, known by his title Kavya Kantha, is the next disciple to be mentioned. His birth and early life have much of romance in them. At his birth in 1878, when his father Narasimha Sastri was praying before God Ganapati at Benares, he had a vision of something like a babe or little animal running up to his feet from the God, which was the reason for naming the child Ganapati. Though dumb and afflicted with all sorts of diseases like enlarged liver and spleen and epileptic fits during his first five years, he was relieved of them in his sixth year by being branded with red-hot iron; and thereafter, as though to make amends for the past dumbness, Ganapati Sastri exhibited marvellous powers of perception, attention, recollection and resourcefulness. Things once read were immediately understood by him and never forgotten. He could attend to eight or ten things at a time (ashtavadhana). He picked up learning with avidity; and at the age of ten, he had composed verses in Sanskrit, prepared astrological almanacs, and mastered several kavyas (literary works), and elementary books on grammar. At twelve he wrote Bhringasandesa in two cantos of mandakranta metre, closely imitating Kalidasa. At fourteen he had mastered the Panchakavyas and the chief books on Sanskrit prosody and rhetoric and had become familiar with the contents of the national epics, the itihasas Ramayana and Mahabharata, and some puranas. At this age he could speak fluently and write with ease in Sanskrit.

Besides literary ambition, he was from the age of ten consumed by another, which dominated his life ever since. The itihasas and puranas, i.e., national epics and legends fired him with emulation of the ancient rishis and saints. If Visvamitra and Dhruva could, by their tapas, i.e., mantrajapa (repetition of sacred syllables), attain power enough to create new worlds or rise to become the pole star, he, Ganapati Sastri of Kalavarai, could do the same. So from the age of eighteen, i.e., soon after his marriage, he was visiting such holy places as the banks of the Godavari, the Ganges and the Jumna, as specially appropriate for his purpose, and spending considerable time in repeating the Sivapanchakshari Mantra, though he had initiation into and practice of many other mantras as well. The interesting adventures of his tapas,  

The earlier chapter deals with M. Sivaprakasam Pillai.
which form the main feature of his life, would fill a small volume,² but these are foreign to the purpose of this book.

Suffice it to say that after a dozen trips to various parts of India where he performed *tapas* with a view to make Mahadeva (Siva) appear before him and grant him boons, he came to Tiru­vannamalai first in 1903-4 and next in 1907, to some extent sadder and wiser. Though he had repeated a crore of *Sivapanchakshari* and as often written Siva’s name, there had only been a few momentary visions and experiences which might be interpreted as appearances of Siva, yet God had not appeared and granted him boons, and it looked as though his life’s quest was futile. His literary ambition had meanwhile taken him to Nadia (Navadwipa) in Bengal, where he dazzled a *pandita sabha* (an assembly of scholars) under the presidency of Asukavi Ambikadatta with his mastery of Sanskrit style and literature, with his ease in impromptu versification and his ready resource in *samasya-poorana*, and obtained the title (and diploma of) *Kavya Kantha³* in 1900.

In 1903 he chose Tiruvannamalai as a good and holy seat of Siva, in the shape of a *tejo linga*, for continuing his *tapas*. Incidentally, having heard of Brahmana Swami on the hill, he visited him twice in the course of a twelve-months’ stay. He then went away to Vellore as a teacher in a school, and organised a band of pupils round him who, with him for their head and guide, would develop their *sakti* (spiritual energy) by force of *mantra japa* to such an extent that the world would be impressed with their ideas and their help for the uplift of this country, if not humanity as a whole.

About December 1907 he gave up his post at the Vellore school and returned to Tiruvannamalai to resume his *mantra japa*. Doubts were oppressing him whether with all his vast study of *puranas*, *itihasas*, *kavyas*, the whole of the Rig Veda, the Upanishads and several books on *mantra sastra*, he had correctly understood the nature and the essentials of *tapas*, since nothing tangible seemed to emerge from his dozen years of penance in all sorts of places and under the most rigorous conditions.

On the ninth day of the Kartikai festival at about 1-30 p.m. he recollected that there was the Brahmana Swami on the hill who would certainly know the true nature of *tapas* from his own experience. In that hot hour he climbed up the hill. The Swami would distinctly remember him as the Pandit who, at his very first visit in 1903, had interpreted the well-known *stotra* of Vinayaka (One should meditate upon the four-armed god with the complexion of the moon who is clad in white robes, is all-pervading and whose countenance is benign, for the eradication of all obstacles.) as applying to him (the Brahmana Swami) also, since he also wore white cloth, was all-pervasive (being identified with Divinity), of a pleasing moon-like colour, had consumed his *antahkarana* (mind composed of the four parts, *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahankara* and *chitta*, i.e., mind, reason, ego and will or de-

² Since written in Sanskrit by Kapali Sastri and published.
³ One from whose throat poems come out spontaneously.
of a gracious mien, and would, if requested, remove obstacles from his devotee’s path. The Swami with his good memory would not have forgotten that scene, nor the great sensation which Sastri (then moving unnoticed through the streets of Tiruvannamalai) produced in Kartikai of 1904 by reading a thousand brilliant Sanskrit verses on Siva which he had composed in Arunachaleswara temple in the few weeks preceding the festival.

Sastri quivered with emotion as he walked up to the Virupaksha cave. Luckily for him the Swami was seated alone on the outer pial. Sastri fell flat on his face and held the Swami’s feet with both hands and his voice trembled with emotion as he said: “All that has to be read I have read. Even Vedanta Sastra I have studied. I have performed *japa* to my heart’s content. Yet I have not up to this time understood what *tapas* is. Hence have I sought refuge at thy feet. Pray enlighten me about the nature of *tapas*.”

For fifteen minutes the Swami silently gazed at Sastri as he sat at his feet in anxious expectation. None came to interrupt them at the time. Then the Swami spoke in short and broken sentences in Tamil:

If one watches whence the notion of ‘T’ springs, the mind will get absorbed into that. That is *tapas*.

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

This instruction filled Sastri’s heart with joy. He stayed for some hours and ascertained the Swami’s name from the attendant Palaniswami to be Venkataraman. Sastri immediately composed five stanzas in praise of the Swami in which he contracted his name to Ramana which has stuck to the Swami ever since. In the letter which Sastri wrote next day to his relations and disciples he mentioned the *upadesa* (instruction) he had received from the Swami known as Brahmana Swami on the hill; and added that he must henceforth be called ‘Maharshi’ since his teaching was quite original, and nothing like what had been found in any book that Sastri had read. He wished all his own disciples to call Brahmana Swami *Bhagavan Maharshi*. Since that day

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1 The source whence the *mantra*-sound emanates is not merely the vocal organs but the *idea* of the sound in the mind, the central force whence the mind and the breath, *i.e.*, intellectual and vegetative activities arise, the Self.

2 The name Ramana or rather Ramani was the pet name given to the Swami (when he was a little boy) by Lakshmanier, an aged relation proficient in Telugu; but it fell into disuse, especially after the youth left Tiruchuzhi. The term *rishi* has been defined; and to prove the appropriateness of the name, the definitions are here given:

A Rishi is one who abstains from sexual intercourse, is continent in food, self-controlled, able to bestow favours or curses on others, and truthful.

They are called Rishis whose sins have been washed away by penance, who speak the absolute truth and who understand the real import of the Vedas and their *angas*.

Who are always in penance and in purity, whose words are significant of the Reality only, and who are very learned.

*Bhaga* signifies the group of qualities consisting of: (1) all-round power, (2) dharma, (3) fame, (4) prosperity, (5) real knowledge, and (6) dispassion.
this name has come into vogue among his devotees; and to Sastri must be given the credit for its currency. As Sastri considered the upadesa he received from the Maharshi to be the result of Mother Sakti's anugraha (grace), he composed a poem of one thousand stanzas in her praise, and styled it Umahasasram; and in three weeks' time he finished it. On the last night he sat up at the Mango Tree Cave with four amanuenses to whom he dictated verses, almost simultaneously. Two hundred or more of such impromptu verses were thus produced by him at one sitting, in the white heat of poetic inspiration, in about four hours' time, i.e., between 8 p.m. and midnight. He was then in the inspiring presence of Ramana Maharshi.

In January, February and March, 1908 Maharshi and Ganapati Sastri spent three months at Pachaiamman Koil with a large number of other devotees. Many were the visitors also. G. Seshayya and party cooked for all of them. Another of Swami's devotees, Rangaswami Iyengar, bore most of the expenses. Sastri went on touching up his Umahasasram and developing his dhyana in accordance with Maharshi's directions. His main objective had not of course been abandoned. He still believed, like Confucius, that he had a lofty mission in life, and that he had adequate power to carry it out. Society in India had yet to be revivified, and old but bright ideas of the Vedic times resuscitated. New and deleterious growths, which impeded national life had to be got rid of. And the entire gamut of heavenly forces (sakti) had yet to be invoked by Sastri and his associates and pupils who formed a sangha (society) for developing sakti mainly by mantra japa (holy incantations). When Sastri left Tiruvannamalai after March 1908, he took Maharshi's permission. At that time he asked Maharshi, "Is the seeking of the source of the 'I' thought, sufficient for the accomplishment of all my aims, or is mantra dhyana needed?" Maharshi answered, "The former would suffice;" and, when asked about the aim, added: "You had better throw the entire burden on the Lord (Isvara). He will carry all and you will be freed from the burden. Let His will prevail."

Sastri frequently visited Tiruvannamalai and Maharshi in subsequent years. By his thorough mastery of the Sanskrit language, and the ease and excellence of his Sanskrit poetry, he must, to some extent, have influenced Maharshi who was always receiving new ideas and learning new languages from persons and books almost unconsciously. Maharshi, who began to learn Sanskrit by perusing Vivekachudamani with its Tamil verse translation, made very rapid progress and composed one stanza in 1915, Arunachala Pancharatnam in 1917, and Upadesaras in 1927. The contact with Sastri was perhaps one of the elements which developed Maharshi's command of Sanskrit.

Sastri's chief service in connection with Ramana Maharshi is his eliciting (through his friends or directly) the replies of Maharshi to questions that constantly arise in the course of one's spiritual development. The first set of questions was put in December 1913 and the others in July and August 1917. The ans-
wers to these questions were embodied in a work of eighteen chapters of verse named Ramana Gita.

Sastri was not a mere pandit learned in Sanskrit but a bold critic too, especially in matters of age and authenticity of Sanskrit works. In caste and other matters of social institution like the age of marriage, untouchability, etc., he was quite modern and progressive. He was always masterful and seldom failed to impress those with whom he came in close contact, with his own ideas and attitude. From 1922 to 1929 he lived at Tiruvannamalai mostly with his family. He was always consulted by Maharshi on matters of importance, especially publications and other activities of the Asram.

Some visions of Ramana Maharshi which Ganapati Sastri has had may be set forth here, as related by himself.

When Sastri was with Maharshi at Pachaimman Koil in the beginning of 1908 something like a meteor appeared at dawn and touched Maharshi’s forehead, receded, and came again and touched him six times in all. This was experienced and confirmed by Maharshi as well.

The same year Sastri went away to Tiruvottiyur near Madras for tapas. There was a Ganesa temple near which he performed his tapas, observing a vow of silence for eighteen days. On the eighteenth day, when he was lying wide awake, he saw the figure of Maharshi coming in and sitting next to him. Sastri sat up in wonder and tried to get up. But Maharshi pressed him on the head. Sastri felt some power overpowering him, and he regarded it as hastadiksha i.e. grace of the Guru conferred by a touch of the hand.

Ever since Maharshi arrived at Tiruvannamalai on 1st September 1896 he had not left the place and never had he seen Tiruvottiyur. But, as Sastri narrated the above in his presence on 17th October 1929, Maharshi said:

One day many years ago during my stay at Virupaksha cave as I was lying down awake, I suddenly felt my body carried up higher and higher till all objects disappeared and all around me was nothing but white light. Then the body began to descend and objects began to appear. I said to myself, 'evidently this is how Siddhas move about at will.' The idea occurred to me that I was at Tiruvottiyur. I was on a high road and I went along. On one side and some distance away from there was a Ganapati temple. I went in and talked, but with whom or what I did not recollect. Suddenly I found myself again lying in Virupaksha Cave. I mentioned this immediately to Palaniswami who was always with me.

Sastri had found that Maharshi’s description of the place at Tiruvottiyur to Kapali Sastri, a few days after the event exactly tallied with the Ganesa temple in which he carried on his tapas.

Sastri, with his colossal learning, remarkable genius and powerful personality, came to the young Maharshi (almost of his own age) who had little knowledge of Sanskrit and who was rapidly absorbing impressions from the books and men he came across. Sastri and all the members of his family along with his own
disciples became the Maharshi’s disciples and were very strongly attached to him. The Maharshi in turn had not merely great admiration for Sastri but was deeply interested in him and his extraordinary aims and aspirations, as also in his family concerns. The Maharshi always submitted his own Sanskrit compositions to Sastri for correction of grammatical or idiomatic errors, as he had never studied Sanskrit grammar but had picked up the language casually in his own way.

Once Sastri was at Anandasrama, Sirsi in North Kanara for some months with some of his disciples and this period is noteworthy on account of some fine letters in Sanskrit written by him to his Master Ramana, on spiritual experiences and other topics also.

He finally settled down about 1930 in the village of Nimpura near Kharagpur. Tapas was then his sole occupation. His disciples looked after his few needs and a small Asram grew round him. He passed away unexpectedly on the 25th of July 1936. When the telegram announcing the sad news reached Bhagavan, he held it in his hand and said “A shock. Nayana has passed away!” Again he said, “Has he?” indicating that he was ever with him. And again with tears rolling down and a wave of his hand, he exclaimed, “Where are we going to see the like of him!”

**Sri Ramakrishna on Visions**

Taking visions to be the whole of religion, many come to the wrong conclusion that any one who has not had such experiences is not at all spiritual. Spirituality and aimless miraclemongering seem to them to be the same thing. But this kind of hankering after miracles does not make man spiritual; on the contrary it makes him weaker daily in all respects. That which does not lead to steadfastness and strength of character, that which does not enable man to take his stand on the rock of purity and truth in defiance of the whole world, or that which entangles him more and more in various kinds of desires instead of setting him free from them, — is outside the realm of spirituality. If extraordinary visions have not produced such results in your life and nevertheless you are having those visions, know that you are still outside the realm of spirituality, and that the visions are due to a diseased brain and so are of no value. If, on the other hand, instead of having wonderful visions and experiences, you find yourself acquiring strength, know for certain that you are on the right path and that you will also have these visions and experiences at the proper time.

— Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master.
THERE is no teacher, nor is there anyone to be taught, therefore there is no teaching. This is the message of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the greatest and most enlightened teacher ever to appear for the benefit of mankind. There is nothing nor is there anyone to become enlightened since the Self is already realised. It is an error of discernment which creates the notion that the ego is separate from the world and its contents and that the ego can become realised. The ego is a part of the world just as any object which can be perceived by the normal waking consciousness and cannot become anything other than what it already is — a relative appearance.

This vortex of energy and vibration, habit and tendency cannot be taught. Awareness which already exists within everyone, everywhere, is imperishable and changeless. The task is not to learn or to acquire but to unlearn and relinquish the obscuring mental processes and attachments and the desires which bind. The ego, a relative thing in a relative world, whose faulty vision wrongly interprets the vibrational data which are fed to it through the functions of the senses alone, obscures the Self. This malfunction of the mind due to erroneous attachment and wrong identification is the real obstacle.

Bhagavan clearly stated that the Guru is within, not somewhere outside in the world of appearances, and to all who came to him for grace and enlightenment. He taught this one ultimate and simple truth: that everyone is already the realised Self and that Guru and Grace are within, and that neither can be found or created anywhere. In this context perhaps his most piercing and significant statement was, “Is there anyone who does not know the Self? Each knows yet does not know the Self. A strange paradox.” The paradox exists only in the mind and not to Awareness which needs neither guru nor his grace to become realised. What Bhagavan means by this paradoxical statement is that you consist of body, mind and consciousness and that neither the body nor the mind which are insentient can ever become realised. He simply states that realisation already exists because you are conscious, but so long as there is identity with the body and the mind realisation is impossible.

Bhagavan also stated, “Grace always IS and is not given”. Thus a further paradox arises in the mind which tries hard to solve it. The answer lies not in the mind nor in the outside world which can be likened to the magnetic traces of a video-tape — but without the tape itself — which in reality exist within the Self. In the same way the ego can be likened to a specific and definable magnetic area

on the magnetic traces of manifestation. Neither exists as either the spatial or the temporal extensions which the functions of the mind and senses cause them to appear. Ego-consciousness is the Self “touching”, permeating and identifying itself with that small magnetic area, that one point of body and mind, that particular vibration called ego-insentient, apart from and yet within the Self. Thus the answer to the paradox can only be sought and solved through the gateway of ego-consciousness.

As consciousness turns inward, or away from the world of manifestation and from the feeling and thought processes of the ego and enters into the higher spiritual area of the soul — which is neither a bridge nor a structure but which functions like a bridging structure — there is an order, or quality, of Awareness different from ego-consciousness. And with the awakening of this Awareness, this non-spatial, non-temporal Beingness, the guru within is quite clearly seen as the one whom Bhagavan states we should
seek by asking, *Who am I?*. Thus is grace vouchsafed.

Bhagavan’s attitude to religions and religious practices further emphasises his statement that Guru is within, for he did not recommend or advocate the use of any religious practice, rite or ritual excepting for those who may have found it necessary. This is because it is all too easy to become involved in and identified with the concepts, the rites and the rituals, all of which are a part of world appearance. All religions and paths, whether group or individual, are one in essence and are equally valid for those who use these means in a sincere and devout manner, but finally the forms of the religions and paths must be transcended when the followers are ripe.

God, Grace and Guru are the one innermost essence of Awareness, which is revealed or experienced when attachment to all forms is broken however exalted or aspirational they may be in their search for God or the Self. A thought is no more or no less a form than is a stone or a piece of wood and a sound has as much or as little substance. Attachment to all things should be allowed to fall away when the essence has been extracted and assimilated in order that the Guru within may be born. Guru within is born in the void of the stillness and the silence, in the perfect quietude of the mind in meditation. Bhagavan said, *Be what you are. . . Be yourself* and nothing more. This is the perfect state of meditation and it can be attained either in solitude or in noisy crowded places. Much practice is needed before this state of Beingness is permanently established but this mental non-attachment can be engaged in anywhere at any time by simply keeping the mind fixed on the enquiry, *Who am I?*. In the beginning other thoughts will intrude and environmental distractions will cause the mind to wander, but if each time this is observed the mind is brought back to the enquiry — this single thought will continue to arise automatically until it is a continuous and one-pointed meditation. Thus with the mind stilled and at peace a process of automatic detachment from the world of appearances and from thought arising therefrom commences and slowly becomes stronger until Awareness — not ego-consciousness — is experienced as a movement from time to eternity. This is the beginning of living in the eternal, but even here, at this point, whilst Awareness coexists with habit and tendency there will be many fluctuations in the state of Beingness. Bhagavan further said, “TO BE is to realise”. Very well then, when these fluctuations are experienced as discord within or without, when thinking runs riot or people and circumstances involve and distract, return.... just *BE,* and continue to *BE* as Bhagavan instructed.

The guru within is the bliss of this Awareness where, sans time, sans space, He is waiting for you to look inwards, to seek inwards, and to beckon with your *sadhana* or surrender — the Guru awaits the cessation of your involvement in the world of non-being, and at the right time his grace will reveal his presence there, within.

Neither his apparent proximity, nor his physical presence or absence is of any consequence so long as He is felt and known to be the Guru within.
Turiya: The Natural State

By N.N. Rajan

The absolute state of pure consciousness is called turiya in Vedantic parlance. It is generally called the fourth state, because it runs through all the three states — waking, dream and sleep.

According to Bhagavan Sri Ramana, it cannot be called the fourth state. It is the natural state. It is ever present and is identical with existence itself. It is not acquired afresh. It is not realised due to ignorance. Only for the sake of analysis when referring to the three states — waking, dream and deep sleep, it is termed as the fourth state. It should not be taken literally so and cannot be strictly called as such.

This uninvolved consciousness is the ever present witness which never undergoes any change as against the changing states of waking, dream and deep sleep. It is the substratum beneath the three states. Turiya is only another name for the Self. A Self-realised sage is ever established in the turiya state. The three states are changing and appear as a passing show and finally merge into turiya alone.

Mind is only a bundle of thoughts. In turiya, there is no mind. In deep sleep also, there is no mind, but due to nescience, we do not realise the bliss as in turiya. In turiya, the three states are wiped out and there are no seeds left to cause birth and death.

The moon derives its light from the sun. In the same way, the mind derives its light from the Self. When the sun begins to shine, only a pale disc of the moon is visible and becomes useless in the light of the sun. So also there is no need for the mind and it becomes useless when the Self is realised.

Within the common husk of all creation there exists a transcendental substratum, the pure consciousness. In sleep we enjoy the cosmic bliss without understanding it. If it is consciously experienced it is turiya, the natural state.

Due to the light of the reflected consciousness the jiva experiences the states of waking, dream and deep sleep, but the Self remains unmoved and unchanged as the only entity. It remains as a silent witness and persists throughout.

Awareness of the body, mind and intellect fades away in deep sleep, yet the jiva exists and the bliss is there though without cognition.

Once to a questioner who feared about

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his experience if he lost his mind, Bhagavan replied, “Everyday you go to sleep wherein you lose your mind and you are not afraid of it. On the other hand you court sleep and subsequently say ‘I slept happily’. By vichara (enquiry) the mind gets crystal pure and in the advanced state merges in the Self. Supreme consciousness which manifests distinctly after extinction of the mind is beyond ordinary human understanding. The individuality is supported by the Self which is a continuous process unrelated to the mind. Still a more real and natural state of consciousness (turiya) bereft of the ‘I am the body’-thought emerges after the extinction of the mind. The mind projects itself only by the reflected light of the Self. When the original, the Self Itself, is realised, why care for the unreal shadow? Directions for actions and speech spring forth as a flash direct from the Self (sphuranam) which shines by Itself without any intermediary. Further there is no fabrication, confusion or distortion which is caused generally by the mischief of the mind. The Self alone remains and this is the final and natural state”.

How can one believe the mind? If the mind can have ideas and create and project things in dream without corresponding external objects, why can it not create objects which are unreal during the waking state also? It follows that the waking experience also is only as real as dream experience.

As a result of the realisation of Truth all duality will vanish. Then the mind loses itself in the Self and the Self alone shines.
A HINDU monk once asked a Christian friend, "Why do Christians call Good Friday 'good' when it was the day on which Jesus Christ was executed?"

This is an excellent question, the answer to which is worth pondering.

According to the Church, it was "good" because without the crucifixion there would have been no miracle of the resurrection (Easter Sunday) and no religion founded upon it. For the resurrection of Christ is the very axis of Christianity. Everyone is born, whether in well-to-do or humble circumstances. Everyone dies too, whether gloriously, insignificantly or ignominiously, painfully or quietly in their sleep. So the triumphant resurrection of Jesus the Christ, his miraculous defeat of death, has always been the foundation and focal point upon which Christianity has made its case.

However, it is not the object here to discuss Church dogma. Rather, it is to open the subject for consideration.

Let us begin with Good Friday, celebrated this year on March 28th. What is so good about a messiah, an avatar, getting ingloriously executed by being nailed to a cross, stark naked, to die of exposure (nails through the hands and feet do not kill a man, only pinion him), tormented by flies, the tropical sun, thirst, and the multitudes of people who inevitably frequent such an event? What meaning can it have for anyone other than the man himself? Jesus angered the existing authorities, threatening the establishment both of his own people and their Roman occupiers. He was betrayed and deserted by his own followers, suffered, cried out in suffering, and even appeared to lose his divinity. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he cried.

The rabble gathered at the foot of the cross did not fail to notice his apparent fall from grace and questioned each other as to what he meant and why he had said it.

So, what is so good about it?

Throughout the four gospels that record Christ's life and words, there is a mixture of dualistic and non-dualistic sayings attributed to him: "I am [is] the way, the truth and the life," "I and my Father are one" are just as often counterpointed by sayings such as, "I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me" and the above-mentioned "Father, Father, why hast thou forsaken me?"
The purpose of an *avatar*, a messiah, is to re-establish *dharma* not merely through his teachings but by the example he sets as he lives his life. Jesus's life is highlighted by five significant events or crises, pregnant with meaning to the inquiring *sadhak*. They are his birth in a cave stable, his baptism in the river Jordan, his transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, his crucifixion on Mt. Golgotha, and his resurrection from the cave tomb hewn out of the living rock: one river, two mountains and two caves. These crises can also be seen in the life of every serious spiritual aspirant. The birth marks his initial awakening to the spiritual life from that of animal man, asleep to his higher possibilities. The baptism is symbolic of his consecration to a life of striving by entering the stream of spiritual *sadhana*. The transfiguration occurs when the *sadhak* rises above his lower self, standing mounted upon it, as it were, and is transformed by the grace of God.

There are many ways to look at the crucifixion. The *jiva* may be seen as crucified upon the cross of his own *prarabdha*. Each man's cross is custom-fitted by the Ordainer prior to birth. We all know the agony of being bound by our circumstances, the necessity of adapting mentally because we are pinioned hand and foot by our own character, *vasanas* and the nature of the world around us. Our only true freedom, Sri Bhagavan asserted, is to enquire; all the rest is pre-ordained and fixed.

Further, in the life of the spiritual aspirant as he progresses on the way, there are moments or times when his greatest glory becomes a crucifixion of sorts. In the cases of Sri Bhagavan and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, we see them bearing the cross of their cancer-struck physical bodies only for the sake of their devotees. Sri Ramakrishna clearly told his devotees that his cancer was due to his taking on of their *karmas* and were it not for their desire to keep him physically present among them, he would leave his body immediately. The same can well be said about Sri Bhagavan submitting to the entreaties of the devotees who, in their desire to prolong his life, most likely hastened its end. Sarcoma, as they found out too late, is one form of cancer that surgery only tends to spread rather than cure.

In the case of the aspirant ripe for full illumination, the crucifixion can be seen in yet another dimension. What happens
when the *jivatman* dies to himself? Only *atman* remains, *jivatman* has become *Paramatman*. This is the crucifixion and resurrection portended by Christ’s dying words: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”. God as object, “the I and my Father”, is withdrawn when the aspiring *jiva* is inevitably crucified upon the cross of spiritual experience. Christ cries out upon the cross that God as Father, as object, has forsaken him.

This is essential for the ultimate realisation of God as absolute subject and the *atman*’s undying identity with it. Crucifixion, the surrender of God as object, is indeed not only good, but the essential prerequisite to resurrection, the final realisation. So long as God is an object in our experience we abide in duality, howsoever gloriously. When God as object is withdrawn from our view, it does indeed constitute an abandonment: an abandonment of duality. Yet, it is only via the loss or abandonment of all that is objective that God or Self as pure subject can be realised.

Sri Ramana Maharshi’s explanation on the significance of the crucifixion sums up the whole matter:

The body is the Cross. Jesus, the son of man, is the ego or ‘I-am-the-body’ idea. When he is crucified, he is resurrected as the Glorious Self — Jesus, the son of God!

“Give up this life if thou wouldst live”.¹

So Good Friday is indeed good.

¹ Talk No. 396, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi.*

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**CHRIST’S SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.
Emancipation

By Paul Deussen

Paul Deussen (1845-1919) was an outstanding German philosopher and philologist who was the first (Western philosopher) to include Eastern thought in a general history of philosophy. We present below an extract from Chapter XV of his treatise The Philosophy of the Upanishads, translated by Reverend A.S. Geden.

Significance of the Doctrine

LOVE of life is the strongest of all the instincts implanted in human nature. In order to preserve life we make any sacrifice. We desire a long life for ourselves and our friends; we congratulate those who attain it, and commiserate those who are called away before their time. And the reason of our mourning for one so prematurely deceased is (when once we give to ourselves a clear account of it) not so much that he is wanting to us, as rather that we are wanting to him. We pity him because he has been so early deprived of existence, as though this were a supreme good. When we console ourselves over the death of a relative by recalling the sufferings, perils and hardships, from which he has escaped, this is the voice of reflection. A purely natural feeling expresses itself differently. It tells us that the loss of life is the most serious by which a man can be overtaken; that the most severe punishment is always that of death. Indeed, so strong in us is the instinct for life, that our whole existence is nothing more than this desire unfolding itself in space as the body and in time as the life.

How is it possible under these circumstances that in the course of development there could arise repeatedly amongst men and become established a disposition to regard that craving for life, upon which our entire empirical existence depends, as something which ought not properly to be? So that man’s true duty is conceived to be not the satisfaction of the natural craving, but its suppression, and therefore the highest goal
appears as a release (moksha), and that not such a release as death brings from a definite existence, but release from existence in general, which as our innate consciousness shows is not to be attained simply through death.

This rarest of all changes of inclination may be traced nowhere clearly than in India, where deliverance, unmodified by the play upon it of the accidental events of history, appears not as a ransom, an atonement, a propitiation, etc., but merely as a release from empirical existence with all its desires, these last being regarded as fetters (bandha), as bonds (granthi), which bind the soul to the objects of sense. Even in India it was not always so, and a long period of development, a vast interval, separates the poets of the Rigveda, who, filled with a warm desire for life, shrink from death, and wish for themselves and their posterity a life of a hundred years.

Yet the philosophy of the future will often turn its glance to India in order to study the doctrine of emancipation in the land of its birth.

The knowledge of the atman is emancipation

Emancipation is not to be regarded as a becoming something which previously had no existence. In the first place, because in the sphere of metaphysical phenomena to which emancipation belongs there is in general no becoming but only a being (as all metaphysical thinkers, not only in India but in the West also, from Parmenides and Plato down to Kant and Schopenhauer, have recognised). The law of causation rules without exception everything that is finite, but nothing that lies outside and beyond, or like emancipation leads beyond. But for a further reason also, emancipation cannot be a coming into being of that which did not previously exist, since it could not then be *summum bonum*. For everything that comes to be is transient, that which from nothingness became something may also return back from being something into its nothingness. What the wave threw up it may sweep away again. Gaudapada rightly says:

If deliverance had a beginning,
Then it could not but have an end.

Nor could it be *summum bonum*, for we might always think of as a higher good an emancipation which had not come into being, and therefore was not exposed to the danger of vanishing away.

Emancipation, therefore, (which we must not judge by one-sided Western ideas which have been shaped from historical and therefore narrow conditions) is not properly a new beginning, but only the perception of that which has existed from eternity. It has hitherto only been concealed from us:

All souls are originally
Free from darkness and without stain,
'Already awakened and delivered
before the world was,
They rise up,' saith the Master.

We are all emancipated already (how could we otherwise become so!):

But just as he who does not know the place of a hidden treasure fails to find it, though he passes over it constantly,
so all these creatures fail to find the world of Brahman, though they daily (in daily sleep) enter into it; for by unreality are they turned aside.¹

This unreality is removed by the knowledge "I am Brahman. I am in truth not an individual, but the atman, the sum and substance of all reality, the first principle which creates, upholds and preserves all worlds".

And therefore today also he who knows this 'I am Brahman' becomes this universe; and even the gods have no power to prevent his so becoming; for he is its soul (atman).²

This thought is briefly and strikingly expressed: "In truth, he who knows that supreme atman, he becomes Brahman", or more correctly "he is already Brahman".³

For deliverance is not affected by the knowledge of the atman, but it consists in this knowledge; it is not a consequence of the knowledge of the atman, but this knowledge is itself already deliverance in all its fullness. He who knows himself as the atman, the first principle of things, he is by that very knowledge free from all desires (akamayamanas), for he knows everything in himself, and there is nothing outside of himself for him to continue to desire: optakamasya ka sprīha? (what can he desire who has everything?) And further, he who knows himself as the atman "is not inflamed by what he has done and left undone," whether it be good or evil, his works consume away like the "reed-stock in the fire", and future works do not cling to him, "as water does not remain on the leaf of the lotus flower". His individuality, the basis of all works, he has seen to be an illusion, in that he has gained possession of the knowledge of the atman, and therein of emancipation:

He who beholds that Loftiest and Deepest,
For him the fetters of the heart break asunder,
For him all doubts are solved,
And his works become nothingness.⁴

The knowledge of the atman does not effect emancipation: it is emancipation

If we seek the origin of this thought that runs through the whole of the Upanishadic literature, we are referred back to the discourses of Yajnavalkhya that are presented in the third and fourth chapters of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

In the fourth chapter of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajnavalkhya addresses King Janaka, whom we are to consider as occupying the foremost position among the sages of his time.

Yajnavalkhya: Since then you are now rich in attendants and goods, hast studied the Vedas and hast listened to the mystical doctrine (art adhitaveda and ukta- upanishattha), tell me, whither will you go when once you depart hence?

Janaka: I do not know, reverend sir, whither I shall go.

¹ Chandogya Upanishad VIII. 3. 2.
² Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1. 4. 10.
³ Mundaka Upanishad III. 2. 9.
⁴ Mundaka Upanishad II. 2. 9.
He does not know, in spite of devayana and devaloka, of which assuredly mention was made in Vedas and Upanishads; the king seems no longer to place confidence in their revelations).

Yajnavalkhya: Then will I declare to you whither you will go.

Janaka: Declare it, reverend sir.

To begin with, Yajnavalkhya describes the individual atman, how it dwells in the heart, Indra and Viraj like as it were its feelers reach to the two eyes, and together with them are nourished by the blood-clots of the heart.

Suddenly when he is speaking in so gross and ordinary fashion about the individual atman, a mist as it were is removed from our eyes. We have the following:

The anterior (eastern) regions of the heavens are his anterior organs, the right hand (southern) regions of the heavens are his right hand organs, etc. All the regions of the heavens are all his organs. He however, the atman, is not so, not so. He is inapprehensible, for he is not apprehended, indestructible, for he is not destroyed, unattachable, for nothing attaches itself to him; he is not fettered, he stirs not, he suffers no harm. O Janaka, you have attained peace. Thus Yajnavalkhya spoke.

The last expression leaves no doubt on the point that herein the intention is to impart the highest instruction, in which we are to seek the answer to the initial question, "Whither will you go when once you depart hence?" And the answer asserts that the soul after death goes nowhere where it has not been from the very beginning, nor does it become other than that which it has always been, the one eternal omnipresent atman.

The doubts which in view of the abrupt form of the paragraph might be felt as to the correctness of this interpretation, are completely removed by the unmistakable teaching which Yajnavalkhya then imparts to Janaka. After that return to a new existence upon earth has been taught here as the fate of the kamayamana, "consumed by desire" (one who therefore does not yet know himself as the atman), there follow words than which deeper, truer, more noble were never uttered by human lips:

Now concerning the man free from desire (akamayamana). He who is without desire being laid to rest, his vital spirits do not withdraw, but he is Brahman. On this subject is the following verse:

When every passion vanishes
That finds a home in the human heart,
Then he who is mortal becomes immortal,
Here already he has attained to Brahman.

Also,

As the skin of a snake lies cast off and dead upon an antheap, so this body then lies. But the bodiless, the immortal, the life is pure Brahman, is pure light.

Brikadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.6-7.
The Will of Rama

(Conversation between Sri Ramakrishna and devotees on October 26, 1884.)

MASTER: Live in the world like a cast-off leaf in a gale. Such a leaf is sometimes blown inside a house and sometimes to a rubbish heap. The leaf goes wherever the wind blows — sometimes to a good place and sometimes to a bad place.

Now God has put you in the world. That is good. Stay here. Again, when He lifts you from here and puts you in a better place, that will be time enough to think about what to do then.

God has put you in the world. What can you do about it? Resign everything to Him. Surrender yourself at His feet. Then there will be no more confusion. Then you will realize that it is God who does everything. All depends on 'the will of Rama'.

A DEVOTEE: What is the story about 'the will of Rama'?

MASTER: In a certain village there lived a weaver. He was a very pious soul. Everyone trusted him and loved him. He used to sell his goods in the market-place. When a customer asked him the price of a piece of cloth, the weaver would say: 'By the will of Rama the price of the yarn is one rupee and the labour four annas; by the will of Rama, the profit is two annas. The price of the cloth, by the will of Rama is one rupee and six annas'. Such was the people's faith in the weaver that the customer would at once pay the price and take the cloth. The weaver was a real devotee of God. After finishing his supper in the

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evening, he would spend long hours in the worship hall meditating on God and chanting His name and glories. Now, late one night the weaver couldn’t get to sleep. He was sitting in the worship hall, smoking now and then, when a band of robbers happened to pass that way. They wanted a man to carry their goods and said to the weaver, ‘Come with us’. So saying, they led him off by the hand. After committing robbery in a house, they put a load of things on the weaver’s head, commanding him to carry them. Suddenly the police arrived and the robbers ran away. But the weaver with his load, was arrested. He was kept in the lockup for the night. Next day he was brought before the magistrate for trial. The villagers learnt what had happened and came to court. They said to the magistrate, ‘Your Honour, this man could never commit a robbery’. Thereupon the magistrate asked the weaver to make his statement.

The weaver said: ‘Your Honour, by the will of Rama I finished my meal at night. Then by the will of Rama I was sitting in the worship hall. It was quite late at night by the will of Rama. By the will of Rama I had been thinking of God and chanting his name and glories, when by the will of Rama a band of robbers passed that way. By the will of Rama they dragged me with them; by the will of Rama they committed a robbery in a house; and by the will of Rama they put a load on my head. Just then, by the will of Rama I was arrested. Then by the will of Rama the police kept me in the lockup for the night and this morning by the will of Rama I have been brought before Your Honour’.

The magistrate realized that the weaver was a pious man and ordered his release. On his way home the weaver said to his friends, ‘By the will of Rama I have been released’.

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How long may the noise last that is produced in a house where a feast is held to which a large party is called? Why, so long as they have not commenced to eat. When dishes are served and the guests fall to eating, three-fourths of the noise is gone. Then the course of sweetmeats — the more they are dealt out, the more does the noise subside; when the turn comes for curds (the last course) only one sound is heard, viz., ‘Soop-soop’. The feast over, the next thing for the guests to do is to go and sleep!

The nearer you come to God the less are you disposed to question and reason. When you come upto Him, when you behold him as the reality,— then all noise — all disputations are at an end. Then it is time for sleep, i.e., for enjoyment which comes in samadhi, in which one is in a state of communion with the blessed Vision Divine.

— Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.
Life Is A Dream

(ACT III)

By Pedro Calderon De La Barca

(Edward Fitzgerald's Translation)

Pedro Calderon De La Barca (1600-1681) of Madrid was the greatest (Spanish) dramatist of his times, next in reputation only to Lope de Vega. In general, the characters in his dramas remain essentially Spanish. However Life is a Dream has a theme which is universal. The message is that the world of senses is a mere shadow. Reality is to be found only in the Eternal.

CLOTALDO: . . . But as they say
Dreams are rough copies of the waking soul
Yet uncorrected of the higher will,
So that men sometimes in their dreams confess
An unsuspected, or forgotten, self;
One must beware to check — ay, if one may,
Stifle ere born, such passion in ourselves
As makes, we see, such havoc with our sleep,
And ill reacts upon the waking day.
And, by the bye, for one test, Segismund,
Between such swearable realities —
Since dreaming, madness, passion are akin
In missing each that salutary rein
Of reason, and the guiding will of man;
One test, I think, of waking sanity
Shall be that conscious power of self-control,
To curb all passion, but much most of all
That evil and vindictive, that ill squares
With human, and with holy canon less,
Which bids us pardon ev'n our enemies,
And much more those who, out of no ill will,
Mistakenly have taken up the rod
Which heaven, they think, has put into their hands.

SEGISMUND: I think I soon shall have to try again —
Sleep has not yet done with me.

CLOTALDO: Such a sleep.
Take my advice — 'tis early yet — the sun
Scarce up above the mountain; go within,
And if the night deceived you, try anew
With morning; morning dreams they say come true.

SEGISMUND: Oh, rather pray for me a sleep so fast
As shall obliterate dream and waking too.

CLOTALDO: So sleep; sleep fast; and sleep away those two
Night-potions, and the waking dream between
Which dream thou must believe; and, if to see
Again, poor Segismund! that dream must be. —
And yet, and yet, in these our ghostly lives,
Half night, half day, half sleeping, half awake,
How if our waking life, like that of sleep,
Be all a dream in that eternal life
To which we wake not till we sleep in death?
How if, I say, the senses we now trust
For date of sensible comparison, —
Ay, ev'n the Reason's self that dates with them,
Should be in essence or intensity
Hereafter so transcendental, and awake
To a perceptive subtlety so keen
As to confess themselves befool'd before,
In all that now they will avouch for most?
One man — like this — but only so much longer,
As life is longer than a summer's day,
Believed himself a king upon his throne,
And play'd at hazard with his fellows' lives,
Who cheaply dream'd away their lives to him.
The sailor dream'd of tossing on the flood:
The soldier of his laurels grown in blood:
The lover of the beauty that he knew
Must yet dissolve to dusty residue:
The merchant and the miser of his bags
Of finger'd gold; the beggar of his rags:
And all this stage of earth on which we seem
Such busy actors, and the parts we play'd,
Substantial as the shadow of a shade,
And dreaming but a dream within a dream!

FIFE: Was it not said, sir,
By some philosopher as yet unborn,
That any chimney-sweep who for twelve hours
Dreams himself king is happy as the king
Who dreams himself twelve hours a chimney sweep?

ABOU BEN ADHEM

By James Leigh Hunt

ABOU BEN ADHEM (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
'What writest thou?' The vision rais'd its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answer'd, 'The names of those who love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so.'
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men.'
The angel wrote, and vanish'd. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And show'd the names whom love of God had blest,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.
Sri Ramana Gita

Chapter Twelve

1. On the nineteenth day, the high-minded Bharadwaja Kapali, great among the learned, questioned Guru Ramana.

2. Kapali: Oh Bhagavan, in the everyday life of both the jnani and the ignorant, one observes the triad, subject, object and cognition.

3. By what special attribute then is a jnani superior to the ignorant one? Oh Lord, may you be pleased to clear this doubt of mine.

4. Bhagavan: For one to whom the subject is not different from the Self, the object and the cognition also do not appear different from the Self.

5. For one to whom, owing to attachment, the subject is different from the Self, the object and the cognition too appear different from the Self.

6. Even in this seeming difference, the jnani perceives the essential unity. The ignorant one, caught in the seeming difference considers himself as separate.

7. Kapali: Lord, that Being, in which these differences of triads appear, is it endowed with Sakti or devoid of Sakti?

8. Bhagavan: Child, that Being, wherein these differences of triads appear is said to be all-powerful by those who know Vedanta.

9. Kapali: That divine Sakti of which the Vedantins speak, is it dynamic or static?

10. Bhagavan: Child, it is only because of the movement of Sakti that the worlds come into being, but the Reality on which the movement is based never moves.

11. That movement of Sakti which is based on the immovable (Reality) and which is the cause of the world, the learned term indefinable maya.

12. This movement appears as if real to the subject. In reality, there is no movement in Being. Oh best of men.

13. The seeming difference between Iswara and Sakti arises from (dualistic) vision. If the vision is withdrawn (into the source), the two become One.

14. Kapali: Bhagavan, this activity of Iswara which is the cause of this vast universe, is it eternal or not? Please enlighten me.

15. Bhagavan: Though the Supreme
moves because of his own supreme Sakti, he in reality is unmoving. Only the Sage can understand this profound mystery.

16. Movement by itself is activity and activity is called Sakti. The Supreme Person through his Sakti created all that we see.

17. Activity is of two kinds: pravritti (manifestation) and nivritti (withdrawal). The Vedic text, “Where all this has become Atman itself”, refers to nivritti.

18. Thus the word sarvam (‘all this’) refers to the many (seen) during dualistic vision. The word abhoot (‘has become’) implies some sort of activity.

19. The specific expression ‘Atman it-
self implies that the multitude of diverse things born of it must in the end be withdrawn into the Atman.

20. O best of men, without Sakti, Being is not apprehended. Sakti has two names, vyapara (activity) and asraya (Ground).

21. The learned say that work such as the creation, (sustenance and dissolution) of the Universe is vyapara (activity). Oh best of men, asraya (Ground) is nothing other than Being.

22. Because Being is itself everything, it depends on nothing else. He who understands Sakti as both activity and Ground — he alone knows.

23. In the absence of activity there can be no diversity for Sat (Being). If Satta be other than Sakti, then no activity can ever rise.

24. If, in course of time, the great dissolution of the universe should occur, this activity merges, as it were, into Being without any difference.

25. Without Sakti none of this activity can ever be; neither creation nor cognition consisting of the triad (subject, object and cognition).

26. The one transcendent Sakti is known by two names; Being, as Ground, and activity, because of the work of creation.

27. Best of men, to those who consider movement alone to be the mark of Sakti, one has to point out that there exists some Supreme Reality as the Ground.

28. That sole, supreme Reality is by some called Sakti, by others Being, by others Brahman and by still others Person (Purusha).

29. There are two ways, child, in which Truth is apprehended. It is defined in terms of its characteristics. And it is (directly) experienced as reality.

30. Thus, knowledge of Being can be had in two ways, through its activity, or by experiencing it as such; that is (indirectly) through its attributes or (directly) by being one with it.

31. Being is said to be the Ground, my child, and activity its attribute. By understanding through activity the source of activity, one gets firmly established in the Ground.

32. Being goes with attributes. And attributes go with Being. The relation between the two, it is said, is one of identity.

33. As Being is apprehended only by its attribute, namely activity, it is eternally active.

34. Activity is not other than Being, if you see indeed. All this knowledge of difference is but imaginary.

35. This creation called the sport of Sakti is only an idea of Iswara. If the idea is transcended, Being alone remains.

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1 Satta: Nature of Being

This is the twelfth chapter entitled 'On Sakti' in Sri Ramana Gita, the science of Brahman and the scripture of Yoga composed by Ramana's disciple Vasishta Ganapati.


Contact print from glass negative, exposed in sunlight on printing-out-paper and toned in gold chloride.
Mysticism in English Poetry: 

Contribution of Sir William Jones 

By Alan Jacobs

Sir William Jones (1746-94) was a distinguished Orientalist and brilliant jurist, a friend of Dr Samuel Johnson, Edward Gibbon and Edmund Burke. He was a judge of the Calcutta High Court from 1783 until his death.

He was of that rare breed of refined Englishmen, along with Warren Hastings and Sir Edwin Arnold, who, during the British domination of India, actually perceived that Hinduism was a great religion, possibly superior in its sweep and depth to the religious of the West.

He was a master of Sanskrit and a pioneer in the science of comparative philology. He was the first to deduce that the European and Greek languages derived from a common root, that of Sanskrit. He devised the term "Indo-European languages".

But it is as a poet that we look at his work. Although his collected works are out of print and only obtainable from university libraries, modern critical scholarship has begun to recognise that Jones' beautiful hymns with Vedic themes had a considerable influence on the romantic poetry pioneered by Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Byron and the young Wordsworth. Prof. Jerome J Mcyana in his preface to the New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse credits Jones with foreshadowing romantic themes in his Oriental poems.

Jones was a master of Sanskrit and did
much to make Indian literature and learning known in Europe. He also translated Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*.

As R.K. Das Gupta has said, writing in the *Sir William Jones Bicentenary Commemoration Volume* published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, in 1948, "Sir William Jones has gathered in his verse, the best fruits of his Oriental learning which English scholars and writers have yet to avail in full".

To illustrate this great man's work of a mystical nature, excerpts from his poems, which exhibit a sensuous musicality — later to flower in the poetry of John Keats and Percy Shelley — are given.

**HYMN TO NARAYANA**

In the tradition of the eighteenth century Sir William first writes an 'argument' or introduction to his poem. In this he says that the first stanza represents the sublimest attributes of the Supreme Being — power, wisdom, goodness and love:

SPIRIT of Spirits, who, through ev'ry part
Of space expanded and of endless time,
Beyond the stretch of lab'ring thought sublime,
Badst uproar into beauteous order start.
Before Heav'n w'ras, Thou art;
Ere spheres beneath us roll'd or spheres above,
Ere earth in firmamental ether hung,
Thou satst alone; till, through thy mystick Love,
Things unexisting to existence sprung,
And grateful descant sung.
What first impell'd thee to exert thy might?
Goodness unlimited. What glorious light
Thy pow'r directed? Wisdom without bound.
What prov'd it first? Oh! Guide my fancy right,
Oh! raise from cumbrous ground My soul in rapture drown'd,
That fearless it may soar on wings of fire:
For Thou, who only knowst, Thou only canst inspire.

In the following stanza he conveys the doctrine of the divine essence and archetypal ideas common to Indian philosophy and Platonism:

Wrapt in eternal solitary shade,
Th' impenetrable gloom or light intense,
Impervious, inaccessible, immense,
Ere spirits were infus'd or forms display'd,
BRAM his own Mind survey'd,
As mortal eyes (thus finite we compare
With infinite) in smoothest mirrors gaze:
Swift, at his look, a shape supremely fair
Leap'd into being with a boundless blaze,
That fifty suns might daze,
Primeval MAYA was the Goddess nam'd,
Who to her sire, with Love divine inflam'd,
A casket gave with rich ideas filled,
From which this gorgeous Universe he fram'd;
For, when th' Almighty will'd,
Unnumber'd worlds to build,
From Unity diversified he sprang,
While gay Creation laugh'd, and procreant Nature rang.

The verse that follows is concerned with ascribing the perception of secondary qualities by our senses under the influence of maya. Sir Jones continues this poem in exquisite musical poetry which was to influence the later Romantic movement of Keats and Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth:

Omniscient Spirit, whose all-ruling pow'r
Bids from each sense bright emanations beam;
Glows in the rainbow, sparkles in the stream,
Smiles in the bud, and glistens in the flow'r
That crowns each vernal bow'r;
Sighs in the gale, and warbles in the throat
Of ev'ry bird, that hails the bloomy spring,
Or tells his love in many a liquid note,
Whilst envious artists touch the rival string,
Till rocks and forests ring;
Breathes in rich fragrance from the sandal grove,
Or where the precious musk-deer playful rove;
In dulcet juice from clust'ring fruit distills,
And burns salubrious in the tasteful clove:
Soft banks and verd'rous hills
Thy present influence fills;
In air, in floods, in caverns, woods, and plains;
Thy will inspires all, thy sov'reign MAYA reigns.

There is a way in which maya manifests the beauty of an apparently solid world of space and beauty:

Blue crystal vault, and elemental fires,
That in th' ethereal fluid blaze and breathe;
Thou, tossing main, whose snaky branches wreathe
This pensile orb with intertwined gyres;
Mountains, whose radiant spires Presumptuous rear their summits to the skies,
And blend their em'rald hue with sapphire light;
Smooth meads and lawns, that glow with varying dyes
Of dew-bespangled leaves and blossoms bright,
Hence! vanish from my sight:
Delusive Pictures! Unsubstantial shows!
My soul absorb'd One only Being knows,
Of all perceptions One abundant source,
Whence ev'ry object ev'ry moment flows:
Suns hence derive their force,
Hence planets learn their course;
But suns and fading worlds I view
no more:
God only I perceive; God only I
adore.

HYMN TO SURYA

In this beautiful poem Jones captures
the Vedic sense of Surya, Sun God, as
'Eternal Mind'.

FOUNTAIN of living light,
That o'er all nature streams,
Of this vast microcosm both nerve
and soul;
Whose swift and subtil beams,
Eluding mortal sight,
Pervade, attract, sustain th' effulgent
whole,
Unite, impel, dilate, calcine,
Give to gold its weight and blaze,
Dart from the diamond many-tinted
rays,
Condense, protrude, transform,
concoct, refine
The sparkling daughters of the mine;
Lord of the lotos, father, friend, and
king,
O Sun, thy pow'rs I sing:
Thy substance Indra with his heav'nly
bands
Nor sings nor understands;
Nor e'en the Vedas three to man
explain
Thy mystick orb triform, though
Brahma tun'd the strain.

He sings of Surya's virtues. Mytholo-
gical references to Surya extol the god's
powers and victories:

Burst into song, ye spheres:
A greater light proclaim,

And hymn, concentrick orbs, with
sev'nfold chime
The God with many a name:
Nor let unhallow'd ears
Drink life and rapture from your
charm sublime:
'Ours bosoms, Aryama, inspire,
Gem of heav'n, and flow'r of day.
Vivasvat, lancer of the golden ray.
Divakara, pure source of holy fire.
Victorious Rama's fervid sire,
Dread child of Aditi, Martanda bless'd.
Or Sura be address'd,
Ravi, or Mihira, or Bhanu bold.
Or Arka, title old,
Or Haridaswa drawn by green-hair'd
steeds,
Or Karmasakhi keen, attesting secret
deeds.

Again Sir Jones bursts into the best of
lyrical poetry to be compared with the
late Romantics. He clearly foreshadows
Keats and Shelley in these beautiful pas-
sages:

Ye clouds, in wavy wreathes
Your dusky van unfold;
O'er dimpled sands, ye surges, gently
flow,
With sapphires ed'gd and gold!
Loose-tressed morning breathes,
O'er dimpled sands, ye surges, gently
flow,
And spreads her blushes with expa-
nsive glow;
But chiefly where heav'n's op'ning
eye
Sparkles at her saffron gate,
How rich, how regal in his orient
state!
Erelong he shall emblaze th' unboun-
ded sky:
The fiends of darkness yelling fly:
While birds of liveliest note and lightest wing
The rising daystar sing,
Who skirts th' horizon with a blazing line
Or topazes divine;
E'en, in their prelude, brighter and more bright,
Flames the red east, and pours insufferable light.
There can be no doubt from these verses that Jones was a poet imbued with the spirit of the Vedas. He combines this love for India with the best he could bring from his own poetic tradition. This was very rare in the days of the East India Company and was not to happen again until the arrival of Sir Edwin Arnold in India:

Mark, how the all-kindling orb
Meridian glory gains!
Round Meru's breathing zone he winds oblique
O'er pure cerulean plains:
His jealous flames absorb
All meaner lights, and unresisted strike
The world with rapt'rous joy and dread.
Ocean, smit with melting pain,
Shrinks, and the fiercest monster of the main
Mantles in caves profound his tusky head
With sea-weeds dank and coral spread:
Less can mild earth and her green daughters bear
The noon's wide-wasting glare;
To rocks the panther creeps; to woody night

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,
Gita. VII. 19.

The vulture steals his flight;
E'en cold chameleons pant in thicket's dun,
And o'er the burning grit th' unwinged locusts run!

But when thy foaming steeds
Descend with rapid pace
Thy fervent axe hast'ning to allay,
What majesty, what grace
Dart o'er the western meads
From thy relenting eye their blended ray!
Soon may th' undazzled sense behold
Rich as Vishnu's diadem,
Or Amrit sparkling in an azure gem,
Thy horizontal globe of molten gold,
Which pearl'd and rubied clouds infold.
It sinks; and myriads of diffusive dyes
Stream o'er the tissued skies,
Till Soma smiles, attracted by the song
Of many a plumed throng
In groves, meads, vales: and, whilst he glides above,
Each bush and dancing bough quaffs harmony and love.

There is now a revived interest in Jones' poetry and, after years of neglect, he will soon be published more widely as the forerunner to the Romantics.
The Sage’s Activity In Inactivity

By Ella Maillart

According to my actual understanding it would be foolishly daring of me to write something about Sri Ramana himself, the mode of life of a sage being an abysmal mystery but for those who enjoy a similar state of consciousness.

How and to whom can be described what is experienced within by one who is desireless, whose sorrow is destroyed, and who is contented with repose in the Self.¹

Neither can I be so bold as to add my gloss to the commentaries that have already been made on the Maharshi’s Forty Verses. Who am I to do it, would it be of any help to anyone, and is it not much better to let Sri Ramana, the Teacher, comment on them himself, if and when he thinks it could be of any use?

As for descriptions of the life at the Ashram of Tiruvannamalai, I don’t think it is within my power to depict the subtle atmosphere which renders the place unique in its setting of dry and hard beauty.

Nevertheless, I would like a small token of homage to reach the feet of Sri Ramana from me as a pledge of my gratefulness. And he will perhaps be indulgent enough to accept the following lines about a thought that occurred to me.

Sooner or later, Westerners who come to know the Maharshi feel constrained to say how puzzled they are by the inactivity of the Sage. “Why doesn’t he help the world? Preach? Travel? Condemn this? Advise that? Humanity is committing suicide: surely it is urgent to do something about it”? We come from a continent where six months of beastly cold weather might partly explain that particular genius which forces us to be physically active, to be on the move all the time, to shape things with our hands, our will altering the aspects as well as the dimensions of the earth.

The Maharshi has already met such reiterated remarks with many a wise or witty answer. Slowly the Westerner might have learned a few things — among them the truth that thought precedes action. One must first of all learn to think properly and having done so one can hope for right action to follow.

Even when we go to the East in search of its Wisdom, we remain at the level of understanding of the hurried visitor who, having identified himself with his body, is convinced that one has to be visibly

¹ Ashtavakra Gita.

Ella Maillart passed away on March 27.
active. It is perhaps unnecessary to explain to him that inactivity is the basis of its corollary, activity; that the useful wheel could not exist or work without a motionless centre; it is unnecessary to comment upon the verse of the Bhagavad Gita about seeing activity in inactivity and inactivity in activity, which proves that one can eventually be established beyond such a pair of opposites.

But with reference to the standpoint of the common man, I would like to make a remark that might interest a few of my friends at home. That remark is borne out by what I strongly felt at Tiruvannamalai.

Even supposing that such great ones as the Maharshi could be really inactive that they simply sat among us but were otherwise lost to our world — neither meditating, praying, nor receiving the respects of their devotees, — (even were such an impossible case possible) I say their activity is tremendous. They are the salt of the earth, their influence spreads out far away and is unconsciously felt even by workers hardly ever giving a thought to such sages. Something intangible emanates from these realised men; rather, what they stand for permeates the land they inhabit. Odeur de saintete... they sanctify the place through their
presence. A kind of equilibrium is brought into being in the mind of the people. Whatever happens — good or bad — in the daily life of these men, everything seems to be in order because the Sage is there.

The Westerner may say that such a faith is possible only among Indian peasants. No, I think that in most cases the position assigned to a sage has little to do with faith. Such a Master has lived for ten, twenty, forty years on the same spot. Those who come to know of him slowly become sure that he is totally "other" than they; he has attained a certitude which makes him free from restlessness, free from fear, desire and doubt, — he can do things none of them can do, because he is egoless. Also, something else had taken place which was more important from the point of view of the layman's understanding. One day the saintly recluse had been questioned about truth, about the aims of life, or about the nature of ultimate Reality. And, though he had studied or read nothing about such subjects, his answers corroborated the teachings of the sacred book: he could even explain obscure passages of these books. His words created a deep, lasting emotion; and what was more important from the point of view of the earnest enquirer, was the fact that he got a firm conviction about the object of his enquiry, a conviction he never had from the study of scriptures. Here was the man, who was living what he described. He spoke with authority. It does not mean that he was fully understood. But in those who had lived near him grew the conviction that here was a man who knew what he was talking about, who knew the "why and how" of what had been harassing them. They stopped worrying continually about problems they were never meant to solve. They resumed their daily tasks and they felt for the first time at peace: there was a living one who knew the ultimate answers. He had proved that, so far, things had to be as they were. As for the future, the only way out was to start loving one's neighbour as oneself. Because he had shown how in Truth we are all the same Self. And the nature of Self is Love. The ultimate object of quest is this Self of Love. So then, to make the object of quest, namely, the Self, synchronise with the highest ideal of moral conduct, namely, Love, — thereby making that Love the Love without the "otherness" — and to inculcate, through one's own life and realisation, that selfless Love for the Self Universal, is a mighty achievement, which none perhaps but Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha achieved in the annals of history.

Is not this the most important action a man can accomplish: to be the link between what we call the concrete world and the Unmanifest, that obviously contains and regulates all creation, — to be the living symbol of that knowledge without which the humanity of today is but a pitiful joke — to implant a lasting peace in the centre of every man's heart in spite of all the surface difficulties, whatever they be? Is not this, I ask, the highest achievement in life?

What do we see in the West of today? Every moment is adding to the despair of men lost in fruitless researches. Hopelessness is gaining ground, each one being obliged to seek a solution along alleys most of which become blind. I
could write many more lines on the burden that life has become to most people. We have no "liberated men" living among us to tell us what it is all about, what to cling to, and how to cling to it in order to come out of our misery.

I want to make a kind of parallel, though I do not know if it is quite right. (I have no way of making sure of it myself, since I am in what I take to be the highest village of Switzerland, far from libraries and study circles.) In China, in the days of its living tradition, the emperor was the tangible link that connected Heaven and Earth. If the emperor had sufficient knowledge, like the real sage, all was well: by his mere presence at the Temple of Heaven all would be kept in order within the four corners of the empire. Everyone knew that there was one who knew, the Son of Heaven was maintaining the connection with the celestial kingdom, everything was kept rightly balanced: (No doubt, a Pope, a Dalai Lama, a Pharaoh should be a similar link).

We have the following verse on this:

Tao never does;  
Yet through it all things are done.  
If the barons and kings would but possess themselves of it,  
The ten thousand creatures would at once be transformed.

Tao is eternal, but has no fame — (name);  
The Uncarved Block, though seeming­ly of small account,  Is greater than anything that is under heaven.

If kings and barons would but possess themselves of it,  
The ten thousand creatures would flock to do them homage;  
Heaven-and-earth would conspire  
To send Sweet Dew.

At the pivotal point between heaven and earth the Chinese emperor was mainly dealing with forces of nature whereas the sage of the Vedanta symbolises a link between the unknowable Ultimate and man. But, before I finish, I would like to point out that in the Tao Te Ching (one of the few books I happen to have with me along with the Ashtavakra Gita and the Gospels) when describing a sage, Lao Tzu expresses nearly the same thing I heard the Maharshi explain to me:

For truly, 'Being and Not-being grow out of one another;  
Difficult and easy complete one an­other;  
Long and short test one another;  
High and low determine one another;  
The sounds of instruments and voice give harmony to one another;  
Front and back give sequence to one another.'

Therefore the Sage relies on actionless activity,  
Carries on wordless teaching,  
But the myriad creatures are worked upon by him: he does not disown them.²

² Extracts from the Tao Te Ching, Ch. XXXII, Transl. By A.Waley. Alien & Unwin. London, 1934. "Sweet Dew tastes like barley-sugar or honey; it falls only when a kingdom is at complete peace" according to Lun Heng.

³ Ch. II — Ibid.
The Maharshi And The Jealous Brother

By Rosalind Christian

When I first read the ancient Celtic story about the Three Brothers (which is a variant of a very farflung tale) and the obviously linked tale of The Two Brothers, I slowly realised that the symbol 'brothers' had two overlapping meanings. Body, mind and spirit were 'brothers' who could work together towards realisation and that, as well as this, 'brothers' were linked incarnations and one 'brother' could hand over his achievements to his next of kin. Thus the sadhana of body helped to steady and concentrate mind, while mind, by moving into rare and pure areas of thought, sets on foot the ascent to the intuitive realm of Spirit. So the 'three brothers' of the Celtic tale who were, auspiciously, triplets, were, I came to believe, three incarnations working together and following a body-mind-spirit sadhana towards moksha, liberation. Of course there could be mistakes which could delay the sadhaka, and two of these have been described in my essay The Maharshi, an Ambush and a Forsaken Bride.  In fact I began to see that each story ended with a mistake which could be rectified or could carry the sadhaka through to another incarnation.

Into what possible mistake, then, could the Two Brothers or linked incarnations possibly fall? One 'brother' it seems could be jealous of the other, could 'attack' and try to destroy him. For sometimes the story does not end with the triumphant 'twins' returning home rejoicing, along with the happy band they have saved from the Witch, Belief-in-the-Reality-of-Death. Alas, on the way, the elder brother is aroused to a sudden blind jealousy. He strikes down his younger brother and leaves him for dead. Now I know there is often jealousy between the siblings of one family — but is it possible between incarnations? However, some words of the Maharshi suggest that it is so. Let me quote Sri Natarajan. Speaking of death he writes:

As usual Ramana himself throws light on what happens normally. At the final hour there is a regular tussle, a battle royal between the deeprooted attachments to this body and the body to which the 'ego' is about to transfer itself. Gasping of breath towards the end is indicative of it...  

Is this the germinal idea behind the struggle we are presented with in the ancient story? Is there a natural and normal dislike of the one-who-shall-come, the one who is stealing our very

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1 The Mountain Path, June 1991.
2 Ramana Way, July 1990.
life? Is there an inherent ‘jealousy’ towards our future selves who can take our lifework and perhaps claim kudos for it? There is an amazing story in Hebrew scripture which seems to develop this jealousy theme, and forces us to very shocking conclusions. It is the story of Joseph and his Brethren.

Joseph was the youngest of many sons, all of whom were jealous of him. Nor was their rancour at all assuaged when he told them this dream:

Hear, I pray you, this dream that I have dreamed: for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood around about and made obeisance to my sheaf. 3

This dream triggers off a savage reaction. The brothers plan first to murder Joseph. Then they hurl him naked into a pit, intending to splash his clothes with blood to persuade their father that wild animals have devoured him. Thinking better of it, they sell him into slavery. If we read the ‘brothers’ as successive incarnations we see that rather than relinquish its hold the ongoing ego prefers death and sin. For surely Joseph is the one-who-should-come and complete the harvest of many lifetimes? The imagery of the corn and the circle suggest as much. Moreover, in another dream the very sun, moon and stars bow down to Joseph. If we read the story in this way it seems to say that ego-mind prefers to sin

3 Genesis, 37
to a greater or lesser degree rather than accept the end of its reign. A shocking conclusion — but can it be denied? Few, I think, would look at this story in that light, but what is quite certain is that many of the themes of ancient religions are also found in Hebrew scripture, either modified or elaborated. Moreover, it is interesting to remember, considering the jealousy of ‘brother’ for ‘brother’ theme, that Jesus also brings in a strong element of jealousy in his parable of The Labourers in the Vineyard where again the ancient symbol of the ‘Harvest’ is used.

How then does the story of the Two Brothers who were twins end? It can end where I left it on with a killing, but, more usually, after slaying his brother the elder twin enters his own kingdom and there learns that he has no grounds for his jealousy. His brother claimed neither his kingdom nor his wife for himself — though it was in his power to do so. Great is the elder’s sorrow and grief at his crime. Now he has slain the very one to whom he owes his life. In the midst of his bitter repentance he suddenly remembers the witch’s healing balm which he carries on his person. He returns to the scene of the crime, applies the balm and sees his brother return to life! With tears he begs forgiveness, but his brother remembers nothing and claims only to have fallen asleep — a telling touch, this. Jealousy and fears are at an end. All is happiness!

It is all too easy to dismiss these tales as meaningless folk tale — fit now only for children. But what is the storyteller actually saying? Is he not saying that sin and crime form a barrier between the generations and destroy any chance of ‘brother’ finding ‘brother’ and so defeating all-powerful Death? This cruelty-guilt barrier is a strongly recurring theme in ancient religion. It makes ‘inheritance’ (whether from ‘father’ to ‘son’ as in some myths, or from ‘brother’ to ‘brother’ as in this tale) impossible. And only repentance can begin to wipe out guilt.
Shakespeare and the Vision of Wholeness

By Sir George Trevelyan

The Vision of Wholeness colours the whole of Shakespeare's writing. It is the key to the hidden allegory which runs through all his plays and new light is thrown upon their interpretation once we begin to look upon them in this way. The concept was still current in the worldview of Shakespeare's day. It was assumed that in the beginning was the vast unity of divine imagination. This then began to divide itself into great polarities, balanced opposites in a harmony of antagonistic action. Among the primary polarities were the "voluntas" and "noluntas", the opposition of male and female running through all life. Gravity and its opposite known as "levity" till the seventeenth century, is another example. The incredible diversification in nature is the picture of this ever increasing partition into subtler polarities. It is the process which Teilhard de Chardin called "complexification", and it created that complex environment which makes it now possible for the human organism to survive.

This division means that all parts are an image of the whole and the whole is contained in every part. Man is thus the microcosm and the image of the macrocosm. Modern radionics rediscovers this truth. The bloodspot is found to radiate on the same wave-length as the whole body and thus diagnosis and healing can be achieved at a distance through restoring the imbalance in radiation pattern.

The opposing view sees the world as the aggregate of separate parts integrated in growth. The distinction is fundamental. Our scientific age is largely founded on the second view. It is clearly accepted in the Marxist doctrine that all the achievements of art and religion are but a superstructure of human thinking built upon the one reality — matter.

The current views of evolution make the tacit assumption that species have grown 'by chance' through natural selection. Man is thus essentially an accident in a realm of nature indifferent to him and his presence. The planet on which we tread is seen as a tiny speck of dust in a vast dead mechanism of the cosmos and life a puff of light to be extinguished in the vast and slow death.

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of a solar system. No wonder that man, finding himself an unimportant accident in a world of death, feels himself at liberty to exploit and 'mine' the planet 'ad lib' for his personal gain and pleasure.

Into this thinking now impinge disturbing thoughts. Perhaps this is not the true picture. Perhaps our assumption of unimportance has led to a vast arrogance. At least we awaken to the fact that it is not the only picture. Perhaps after all we must take more literally the phrases that we say so lightly.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

By him were all things made.

As Pope had it:

All are but parts of one stupendous whole
Whose body nature is and God the soul.

We must recognise that until recently the 'vision of wholeness' was the basic tenet of the thinking mind. It still coloured all thought in Shakespeare's day. Indeed we must admit that ours is the only culture since the world began which has not in some way held that life began in a great unity and that life on our earth plane is held by a great and living organism of spiritual being. Our arrogant age has abandoned this world-view, writing off the earlier thinkers as victims of superstition. Now it begins to reawaken. Stammeringly and with a new humility we begin to recognise that the older thinkers may have been right. Man may after all prove to be the centre of a living organism of being; the planet instead of a speck of dead dust, may prove to be a living seed, holding in the crown of its evolution a spiritual future of enormous importance. Certainly man as a free and conscious kingdom seems to have been the concern of God or the Gods.

“What is man, that Thou art mindful of him — For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.”

In the new understanding we can see the human kingdom as that held in which nature becomes conscious of herself. The living organism of the planet looks out through human consciousness into a cosmos shot through with living thought and being. Man is indeed responsible to God for the life on the planet. The divine world has handed over to him the task of tending and developing life upon the planet. We are the channels for the inflow of the spirit and of light but in our greed, with its offspring fear, we turn it all to confusion and darkness. In a new humility we must take up our task of stewards of God and ambassadors for the divine.

All mythology, all fairy stories, tell in terms of symbolism and allegory of that truth which it is so essential for modern man to rediscover if he is to keep his sanity. The inner core of man is eternal spiritual being belonging to a timeless world of light. This descends into the world of matter to undertake an allegorical journey, through dark forest or dangerous seas, until it can find and unite with its own higher or spiritual Self. When this mystical marriage has been
achieved, return to the eternal realms becomes possible. A thousand variants on this timeless theme are found by all who know how to read in legend and drama. The hero in all mythology is one who journeys into the timeless realms to bring back the elixir of life, be it golden fleece, Holy Grail, talisman or jewel, with life-enhancing power.

Shakespeare’s plays constitute, in this sense, a great body of mythology. Once we have seen the ‘vision of wholeness’ and the truth of the eternal being of man we can re-read the plays on a different level. They strengthen the soul in the truths they reveal.

The theme of unity runs through them all. First comes the primal unity diversified into polarities thrown into confusion by human error, the task of the hero being to restore the harmony through uniting with his higher self as symbolised by the heroine. A cosmic process is portrayed on the level of human relations.

*The Comedy of Errors* is one of the clearest examples of this. Here a condition of Elysian unity is first described, then division into pairs, paired yet again, like cells dividing. The uttermost confusion comes about through human error and frailty, until finally the right pairs find each other and the original harmony is restored. A comedy indeed, some would say a brilliant youthful farce. Yet at the same time in this early play Shakespeare gives us his whole thesis and follows it through in all the other comedies. The greatest error is to think that this play is simply a comedy. It is a great allegory, but as with all Shakespeare, no moral is forced upon us. We have no need to bother about the hidden allegory. We may take the plays at their face value. The very title *As you like it* shows this. *As you like it* turns out to be the most complete morality play, with not one character or even name that has not its significance in the pattern. Space does not allow analysis here and only the
hint can be given to urge the reader to explore further. “Feed yourselves by questioning”, is Hymen’s final injunction. Orlando, representing the awakening powers of affection, revolts against the dominant Will (Oliver, his brother), finds his higher Self (Rosalind), is separated from her to go through soul trails until he can truly come back to her again, worthy of the mystical marriage. Exiled to the forest, an eternal symbol of the journey through time, he finds her in disguise and is trained by her in love. When Will and heart and thinking are in harmony through the integration of the personality, a composite marriage is celebrated:

Now is there joy in heaven
When earthly things made even
Atone together.

In allegorical interpretation all characters must be seen as aspects of the personality. This is well known in the psychology of dreams. The unbelievable genius of Shakespeare is that he is able to keep this psychological unity while giving us outward stories of adventure and conflict which even have political patterns as well.

*The Merchant of Venice* compares remarkably with *As you like it*. In both plays we have the clear indication of the need to attain to a higher level of consciousness (City, Forest and Court; Venice, the rich City, and Belmont the fair mountain where lives the rich princess). The hero Bassanio wins his higher Self, Portia, through a wonderful fairy-story lottery, but in that instant has to be separated from her to return to Venice to watch what is virtually the ritual murder of his friend by the Jew. The task of man on this plane is to find unity with his spiritual Self. The higher worlds waste no time. Once the two, hero and heroine, have recognised and loved each other they are allowed no time for enjoyment. They are separated by an apparently cruel fate and made to endure more ordeals and trials until they prove themselves worthy of the final union. How often does this pattern show itself in our actual lives, suggesting that we are all engaged in an allegorical journey working out a web of destiny with a goal set in a higher plane of consciousness. Portia, the higher love and wisdom, comes to the rescue in disguise, the only one who knows the overall picture and can see how the citizens of the worldly Venice have lost their way in their search for earthly gain. “Tarry a moment, there is something else” she calls as Shylock’s knife comes up to take the pound of flesh from the merchant. This line sounds like a clarion call to our materialistic culture, an eleventh hour warning that there is a whole set of values and vision of the world which we have missed. The story ends again with the uniting in composite marriages in the Elysian world of Belmont, the true unity of personality and spirit now established.

So also with that great mystery play *The Tempest*. Again the hero Ferdinand sees and loves Miranda. “They have changed eyes”. Once the inner unity is secure the initiating priest, Prospero, separates them with apparent cruelty until after fitting trials — “thou hast strangely stood the test” — Ferdinand is allowed to marry his higher soul of love and is shown in pageant form the great
vision of the spiritual meaning of the world. The whole play is the picture of an initiation. On the magic island two more parties undergo ordeals fitting for their nature. The court party is drawn to repentance and the characters representing sensual man (Stephano and Trinculo) meet the tempter Caliban and re-experience the Fall.

An important clue in the imagery of The Tempest is that all characters are shown as moving up and down through the symbolical elements from the mists of confusion into clear air, from air up to celestial light or down into the literal mires and bogs of sensuality.

So we can tackle play after play and they will break down into allegory. The strangest and most improbable situations, such as no modern dramatist would dare to present, take their place with an inevitable rightness when looked at in this way. For instance, the almost absurd ‘happy ending’ of The Merchant of Venice, when Portia gives back his lost ships to Antonio, is seen as the only possible finish for the picture of the integrated soul. “That which thy child’s mistake fancied as lost I have kept for thee in Heaven. Rise, take my hand and come”. (Hound of Heaven).

It seems that Shakespeare uses the Comedies to present his picture of the transmutation of the soul by lifting it to other levels of consciousness. All these plays have profound cosmic meaning, but this never intrudes itself. There is no constraint or obligation to bother about it, and never is there a sense that Shakespeare is imposing teaching upon us.

This is understandable in that in his age the esoteric knowledge could not be outwardly spoken. To write mystery or morality plays was unacceptable to reformation thought. The inner significance of the plays is in line with the stream of hidden wisdom which has passed down from the mystery temples of the ancients. “Shakespeare”, whoever he was, is certainly an example of cosmic consciousness. To quote from Arnold’s sonnet:

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge . . .

The wholeness of life, the interpenetration of matter and spirit, was all included in his tremendous vision and if we could know the whole cycle of plays we should have revealed to us the whole mystery of life.

Each generation is called upon to re-interpret Shakespeare in its own way. Perhaps the allegorical and imaginative interpretation is fitting for our times. Those who are not drawn to the world view of spiritual wholeness will assuredly challenge this as a forcing of the plays into a pattern which suits the interpreter. Be this as it may. It will seem so if the basic view is not held. But there are many in our time for whom the “vision of wholeness” throws a new flood of light on the whole meaning of life, restoring lost values and giving to man a new significance.

We are rediscovering that ours is the only culture in the whole of history that has not held in some way that man is
spiritual in nature and has a great task to perform and much to learn while on his "errring pilgrimage" through life on the physical planes. When we feel this and direct our attention to the works of hu­man genius we find that a new light of understanding floods into them. The Odyssey becomes an allegory directly relevant to modern consciousness. Every fairy tale speaks eternal truths which man must rediscover for himself today. Old sculpture begins to speak and the secret meaning of ritual drama begins to reveal itself.

A symbol, after all, can have manifold meanings. Its purpose is to enhance the significance of life. If it does this for you, how can we say it is not true? In the balanced polarities of life truth often exists in the very contradictions. Thus we must learn with Shakespeare that several interpretations can be valid at the same moment and if my 'truth' is not quite the same as that which you have seen, we do not need to be disturbed. Both may hold good.

Almost all the heroes are princes and aristocratic figures. This shows us that the tales are about the inner royalty of the human ego in its struggle for integration. 'The great tragedies show the hero faced by a deadly flaw in his own soul-nature which draws upon him the corresponding ordeal and temptation in the form of a person or event (Iago, Lady Macbeth, Hamlet's ghost). If he falls, he is thrown into mental confusion, is struck by a second temptation, falls again and plunges down into the horror of "accidental death and confused events", with the stage littered with corpses.

Hamlet can be read (among the many interpretations) as a study of the disintegration of a great soul. Measure for Measure is a textbook example of a psychological experiment in the effects of creative mercy. Transmutation of the soul is the eternal theme. (Read John Vyvyan's brilliant study The Shakespearean Ethic).

Always, in beginning to explore the plays in this way, we must remember that all characters and even situations are to be seen as aspects of the entire personality (your soul and mine, not merely an Elizabethan or Roman gentleman).

To take one example at risk of being accused of the facility of lifting a quotation out of its place. Macbeth comes out of the supper where King Duncan has been feasted and in the darkness of the Castle Hall says "If tw'ere done when t'is done, then t'were well it were done quickly". We so easily slip over this opening to the soliloquy. But pause and see what other great saying it reflects. "That which thou hast to do, do quickly". It hits you between the eyes. Would not Judas, leaving that other Supper, have said the same after his Master's injunction? Duncan is seen to represent the Christ in us, Macbeth the Judas. When for ambition we have killed the light within us, is it not inevitable that we shall "sleep no more"? We are deliberately "pulling down the blanket of the dark". The tragedy is lifted from twelfth century Scotland into our contemporary psychological situation.
The enigmatic final words of Prospero, Shakespeare’s Epilogue in his final play, are not merely his farewell to the stage. They gain a subtle meaning and make more sense if we can see them as an exhortation to interpretation. Study them again with this in mind. We can each of us begin the exploration of the plays to discover the life-enhancing secrets hidden beneath the surface story:

In this bare island by your spell,
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands;
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails

And my ending is despair
Unless I be relieved by prayer.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,

Let me not dwell

I saw the Maharshi. It did not take long for me to be sure that I was in front of one who had in that very body I could see before me solved life’s problem for himself. The radiant peace around him proved it beyond all cavil. The calm, like that of the midnight sky, was something too real to question for a moment. That part of my search, then, was over, even at the first glimpse. In the flesh I had seen a “Master”.

I told my friend that night that I knew what the books call a jivanmukta. Please don’t ask me how I knew for I cannot answer that. It was just as one knows that water is wet and the sky is blue. It could not be denied, — self-evident is the word. But I could not go as far as my friend went in asserting that the Maharshi is God Himself. Of course, in one sense, all are God, as the poem is its creator, but I am not by temperament a worshipper of human forms. God is transcendent as truly as he is immanent in his creation. “With one fragment of Myself… and I remain”, says the Gita, truly indeed.

I had brought the usual list of questions to be asked, of course, — philosophical they were, and mostly about rebirth and spiritual evolution. As they were never asked, they do not matter. Shyness kept me silent while sitting in the Hall those first days. And before I broke that silence, the unspoken questions had solved themselves in their own irrelevance. It is a common experience; I only add my own testimony to that of many others.

— Duncan Greenless,
(Article in) Golden Jubilee Souvenir,
(Pub: Sri Ramanasramam).
THE lost Gospel according to Thomas, discovered "by accident" in an Egyptian cave in 1945, couldn't have appeared at a more opportune moment in history, or with a message that speaks more directly to our condition and needs. In this early apocryphal Christian text the living voice of Jesus comes down to us directly, bypassing all that men have been saying about him and doing in his name. It comes across distinctly, high above the confused roar of two millennia of Christendom, so-called. It's as if he himself had planted this beneficent time-bomb in the cave at Nag Hammadi, carefully setting the fuse to delay its explosion till the world would be ready for the impact. It's as if, so tragically far ahead of his own time, he knew when significant numbers of quite ordinary men and women (as distinct from highly specialised and disciplined saints and sages and seers) would at last be capable of catching up with his vision of the Light, his experience of what he calls the Kingdom.

I can't do better than begin by citing a number of typical sayings or logia from this Gospel:

Let him who seeks not cease till he finds. And when he finds he will be astonished, and when he is astonished he will marvel, and will be king over all.

You examine the face of heaven and earth, but you don't know what's where you are. And you ignore the present moment.

The old man will not hesitate to ask the infant of seven days about the place of life, and he will live.

The heavens will fold and the earth before your eyes, but he who lives from the One will experience neither death nor fear.

Many stand before the door, but it is the Alone who enters the bridechamber.

I am the Light which is over everything. I am the All. From me the All has gone forth, and to me the All has returned. Split the wood and I am there. Lift the stone and you will find me.

He who knows everything except himself, lacks everything.

We come from the Light, from the place where the Light comes into existence through itself alone.

I stood in the middle of the world and I appeared to them in the flesh. I found them all drunk. I found none that were thirsty. And my soul was troubled for the children of men, for they are blind in their hearts, and they do not see that they came empty into the world.

There is a Light in the Light-man and it lights up the whole world.

This fifth Gospel or God-spell is very different from the four canonical Gospels. It is a collection of the sayings or logia of Jesus, some of which echo his sayings in the other gospels, and some of which are unique to Thomas. It contains no miracles or tall stories, no walkings on the water, no raisings from the dead, no immaculate conceptions or ascensions into heaven or descents into hell: nothing at all to strain our credulity. Certainly it's a later compilation than the canonical four. Nevertheless some scholars believe it may draw on earlier sources than they do, and therefore offers us what might be called a de-mythologised Jesus. Be that as it may, the question before us now is the value and truth of these sayings, no matter how authentic they are historically, how far they are the words of Jesus, or of his followers and interpreters.

The Gospel begins with a warning, a challenge, and a huge promise. The warning is that these sayings of Jesus aren't just for reading. There's work to do on them. Their significance doesn't lie on their surface, their secret has to be dug into and exposed. The challenge is to persist in this work till the secret meaning is secret no longer, but obvious. And the reward for making this discovery is nothing less than eternal life and kingship.

Thus encouraged, let's get down to work at once. If we are in earnest about it we are at once faced with some practical questions about how to proceed — questions of where, and how, and what. Exactly where are we to look for this good news, this treasure of treasures? Exactly how shall we seek it, in what spirit shall we address this most promising of searches? By what marks shall we recognise it when we have found it?

Happily our Gospel itself answers these procedural questions for us. It hands us a great bunch of keys for unlocking the treasury.

First take the question of where the saving truth, the secret of secrets, is to be found. The answer leaves no room for doubt. The kingdom — the place of Life, of Knowledge, of Rest — isn't above or beyond or beneath. It is within. It is right where I am at this moment, nearer to me than myself, than anything else. It is the Home I never really left, the focus and
midpoint of what is at once my world and the world, forever here and never there. Which can only mean that all books — including, of course the one you are now reading, and indeed the Gospel of Thomas itself — are literally beside the point by some twelve inches. Out there, they are of no value except as pointers to their Reader, to the one who is zero inches from himself or herself. In effect, Jesus insists that you turn your attention round 180 degrees and simultaneously look at what you are looking out of and what you are looking at. It’s as simple as that, and as easy as winking, if only we will cease pretending it’s complicated and difficult and reserved for very special people. Whoever you are and just as you are, it is here, and here alone, that you will find the pearl, the buried Treasure, the Deathless, the Kingship that is your very own. Here at Centre, you are the key, you are the secret of these sayings of Jesus.

The second question that our Gospel poses is how we are to go about looking for the Treasure. In what manner and what spirit shall we undertake this great work that is really so effortless, if we are to succeed? Again, our text is quite definite. We must come to this adventure with inspired naivete, in the direct and accepting spirit of a child, even of an infant. The Kingdom is invisible to grown-ups, as such. We have to be unprejudiced and attentive enough to set aside what we think we know and start looking all over again, as if we had never looked before, and trusting what we find. In this investigation our learning, our belief-systems, our religious formulae, our common sense (so-called), our tangled web of opinions — all these are so many layers of cataract blinding us to what is quite obvious to the clear eye of the young child. In other words, what we have to do is set up shop trading concepts for precepts, and make our fortune.

The third question asks what exactly it is that we are seeking. How shall we recognise this Kingdom when we come to its frontier? How shall we be sure it’s our Homeland? What is the climate, the distinctive topography, of this Promised Land? By what signs shall we know that we have unearthed the real secret of Thomas, and not just some notion we have of it? Well, the clues — metaphors and similes and straight descriptions — scattered throughout our text, are plentiful, varied, homely, telling, and often beautiful. This Dear Country of ours, our native Land, is a place of paradox and profound mystery, yet its air is clearer than broad daylight, and broader than the widest sky. According to Thomas it is empty yet full of the All. Empty for filling with whatever happens to be on offer, we might say. It is where the opposites — inside and outside, up and down, male and female (to name but a few) — come together and are one and the same. Here is the One not born of woman, whom no eye sees or ear hears or hand touches. Here is the Being of all beings, that remains when all beings pass away. Here is the Stillness in which all moves are made. Here is the Light within the Light-man that lights up the whole world. Thus speaks the Jesus for our time.

And now you and I know precisely where to look, and precisely how to look, and precisely what we are looking for, there’s only one thing left to do — and
that’s LOOK. You look for your Self, I look for my Self, as if for the very first time. Yes, please do so at this very moment, without putting this book down. Dare to look at the very spot you occupy and see whether it is in fact occupied — stuffed full of anatomy — Or, as Jesus says, empty. Empty, just now, for these printed words. Why not stop being eccentric and out on a limb — to say nothing of out to lunch? Why not be where you alone are and where you are Alone, the sole discoverer of and the sole expert on and the sole resident in this Place of places? The solitary Columbus of this Ever-new-World — the Kingdom Within, your kingdom?

Jesus had a rough passage. It was no joke to be so ahead of his time and place. How can we make amends? I remember a couple of lines of a hymn we used to sing as small children:

What can we do for Jesus’ sake,  
Who is so high and good and great?

Well, there’s one thing we adults can do right away, so that his labour and agony shall not be in vain, and that is — not to believe this teaching of his in Thomas, but to test it, sincerely verifying (and falsifying) the scriptures by our experience instead of our experience by the scriptures. For instance, he tells us:

If those who guide you say to you  
Lo, the Kingdom is in heaven,  
Then the birds of heaven will get  
there before you.

If they say to you  
It is in the sea,  
Then the fish will get there before  
you.

But the Kingdom is within you.

Dear Reader, if not for love of Jesus then out of respect for him, or out of interest in what he alleges you really are, or at least out of a blend of courtesy and curiosity, look and see if he knows what he’s talking about. Put his words to the test by carrying out the following simple experiment. Just reading my words is worse than useless.

Point up to the sky now and perhaps flying birds. Or, if you are indoors, point up to the ceiling, and observe that your finger is pointing at something or other, and certainly not at the emptiness which is the Kingdom. Next, point outwards to those hills and trees and houses, or at the wall and door and furniture on the opposite side of the room, and notice that you are pointing at a collection of distant objects. Next, point at the ground or the floor. And then, slowly and with great attention, at your feet, then your lap, then your trunk, and note how in every case this thing you call your finger is indicating another thing, and there is a distance between them. And certainly, once more, the Kingdom is neither a thing nor distant from anything: on the contrary, it’s all inclusive. Finally, point to your ‘face’. Now, what, on present evidence, is that finger pointing at?

Is it pointing at a smallish, opaque, coloured, textured, moving, complex, clearly outlined thing? Or at an Emptiness which, though packed with all classes of things and qualities, is in a class by itself, is quite unique? Look for yourself! Isn’t it immense, transparent, colourless and textureless, still, simple, plain in both senses — and keenly aware of itself as all this? Going by what’s given, dropping
imagination, importing into the situation nothing foreign to it, are you not at this moment Capacity or Space for the whole scene, from sky to Earth, from Earth to feet, from feet to neckline — Aware Space for it all to happen in? I'm in no position to tell you what it's like being you at this moment. Only you can say. Please go on looking at what that finger is pointing at, and make up your mind on this essential subject — which is yourself as Subject — once and for all.

Surely the good news is true, and the Kingdom is indeed within you.

In another Logion of our Gospel Jesus sadly complains that humans are drunk, are so blind drunk that they can't see their Emptiness. You and I, at least, have sobered up enough now to notice that we don't live inside small, tightly packed boxes, pecking out of the dark and sticky interior through two tiny holes at a distant world. No, we are out, out and about, up and away. Clearly we see how wide open we are, openness itself, at large, huge, extending right up to and embracing the Sun and stars. How refreshing, how liberating it is to be a small lit-up thing no longer, but instead the Light that lights all the things in the world. And this shining Immensity that you really are — how could this be born of any earthly mother, or (for that matter) be born at all? Is this the sort of thing that any funeral director could handle, or that requires his services? You who consider such questions are their answer. You know, you see, you are the secret of the Gospel of Thomas. Baffling you and me with no fairy tales, going easy on religious controversy and pious propaganda, it demands that we take nothing on trust. But try it out, and at once it makes perfect sense. It lays bare our splendour, and shows us how to live.

Running counter to the resurgence of fundamentalism (what a misnomer!) and superstition of every kind, a great simplification is going on. It is a movement away from the outward forms of religion — from their magical observances, their dogmas as incredible as they are ingenious (but still cruelly divisive), from massive ecclesiastical machinery creaking and stalling — a movement, away from all this obfuscation, towards the beatific vision that lurks at the core of the great religious traditions, towards the simple, patient, strongly beating heart of them all. Here is a transparently honest and anti-sectarian spirituality founded on direct experience instead of dogma and hearsay.

I suggest that it's no accident that the cave in Nag Hammadi held onto its treasure for some seventeen hundred years, and only gave it up when men and women had — in sufficient numbers to change history — become sceptical and sober enough to crack its secret code, revealing what is, after all perfectly obvious. In any case, thanks partly to the Jesus of Thomas, it's becoming more and more difficult to deny that we are the very opposite of the little, opaque, un-luminous perishers we appear to be.

The cat is out of the bag. The saving truth is the most open of secrets. The Kingdom has come, and the people are beginning to notice it.
YOU know, off and on, Bhagavan has been going through *Sri Ramana Lila* which has recently been received from the printers. In that connection, Rangaswami asked yesterday, "Has the story about the towel been written in it?" As it was not in the book, Bhagavan told us as follows:

"About forty years ago — perhaps in 1906 — when I was in Pachiamman Koil, I had with me only one Malayalam towel. It was given to me by somebody. As the material was flimsy it became worn out within two months and was torn in several places. Palaniswami was not in town. I had therefore to look after the cooking and all other domestic work. As I used to dry my feet and hands with the towel every now and then, it got all sorts of colours. Its condition would be seen if I used it as a cover for the body. So I used to roll it and keep it near at hand. What did it matter to me? It was enough if the required work gets done with its help. After bathing, I used to dry myself with the towel, and then put it out to dry. I used to guard it carefully so that no one else would know about it. One day a mischievous little boy saw when I was drying it, and said, 'Swami, Swami, this towel is required by the Governor. He has asked me to get it from you. Please give it to me'. So saying he mischievously stretched out his hand. 'Oh, dear! This towel! No, I cannot give it. Go away!' I said.

"As that towel gradually got torn more and more with a thousand holes in it, I ceased to keep it with me lest it should be seen by Sesha Iyer and others. I used it after my bath, and then after drying it, hid it in a hole in the trunk of a tree within the temple precincts. One day when I went out somewhere, Sesha Iyer and others while searching for something else, happened to search that hole in the tree trunk, and found the towel. Seeing its condition and blaming themselves for their neglect, they began offering profuse apologies when I returned. 'What is the matter?' I asked. 'Is it this towel with a thousand holes that you are daily drying your body with after your bath? Shame on our devotion to you! We could not find out even this'. So saying, they brought several bundles of towels.

"Something else also happened be-

From *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, Pub: Sri Ramanasramam
fore this. My kaupinam (small piece of cloth, usually a small strip, worn over the privities) got torn. I do not usually ask anyone for anything. Bodily privacy has however to be maintained. Where could I get a needle and thread available to mend the kaupinam? At last, I got hold of a thorn, made a hole in it, took out a thread from the kaupinam itself, put it into the hole and thus mended the cloth, and, so as to hide the place where it was mended, I used to fold it suitably before putting it on. Time passed like that. What do we need? Such were those days”! said Bhagavan.

It was quite natural for him to tell us all this but we who heard him felt deeply grieved. Having heard this incident from Bhagavan some time back, Muruganar is reported to have written a verse. The purport of that verse is:

Oh, Venkata Ramana, who wore a kaupinam mended by a thorn, and who was served by Indra as a towel with a thousand eyes.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada:
His Life and Work

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

IN THE cold and crowded streets of many Western cities it is not unusual to find Hare Krishna devotees joyfully chanting and dancing. Dressed in their flowing white or pale orange coloured dhotis and saris, they cheerfully clash their brass cymbals in unison and praise Krishna in public with arms upraised. It is indeed inspiring to see such demonstrations of piety in groups predominantly composed of youngsters, especially as we live in an age of materialism and deteriorating moral standards. How wonderful that some have ceased to worship Mammon and taken refuge in Krishna instead!

One cannot be a full member of the Hare Krishna movement founded by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, without leading a highly disciplined life. Prabhupada insisted that his disciples should follow several basic rules which centred round the avoidance of illicit sex, intoxicants and stimulants (including the taking of tea and coffee), meat-eating and gambling — they should regularly practise the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra.

The Hare Krishna movement is essentially rooted in the bhakti tradition of Vaishnavism. The spiritual ancestry, so to say, of Prabhupada could be traced to devotional practices that flourished in sixteenth century Bengal. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534) was a great saint. His appearance at a critical juncture in the history of India made a vast difference to the scene and helped the revival of religious values. Members of all castes were admitted into his order. He tried very hard to revive the flagging interest in Krishna. According to Chaitanya, Krishna is identical with God. Therefore the ultimate purpose of life is the adoration of Krishna. Chaitanya advocated and practised the congregational chanting of the holy name of God; this practice was regarded as the principal form of worship. Any person who so chants can be elevated to the highest state of Krishna consciousness, provided he also leads a sinless life.

Born on September 1st 1896 in the populous city of Calcutta that had once been the proud capital of the British raj, Prabhupada’s original name was Abhay Charan De. An astrologer who examined the child’s horoscope stated that at the age of 70 he would not only travel overseas but would also become a great exponent of religion and open 108 temples. His father was a cloth merchant of a gentle and affectionate nature; he was a Vaishnava who was careful to inculcate in Abhay the love of Krishna. His mother was also religious-minded and the boy
was raised in an environment that stressed spiritual values. Quite early in life he was taught to play the mridanga (drum). The boy learnt to chant and glorify God. Apparently his childhood was a happy one. He received an English education at the Scottish Churches' College in Calcutta.

His father was responsible for arranging Abhay's marriage to the daughter of a merchant but the lad continued living with his family and she with hers because he had not yet finished his college education.

By an interesting coincidence, Abhay was a schoolmate of Subhas Chandra Bose who later organised the Indian National Army with the intention of forcibly ousting the British from India. When Bose urged his fellow students to join the freedom struggle, Abhay appreciated the ideals of the independence movement but he was not interested in political activity. Abhay was particularly drawn towards Mahatma Gandhi who was steeped in the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita. Gandhi's pure lifestyle made a strong impression on him. Gandhi had called on Indian students to give up their studies because foreign-run schools were instilling in them a slavish mentality. Consequently, after completing his fourth year in college and passing his examination in 1920, Abhay refused to accept his diploma! It was a gesture of protest. His father was understandably disturbed but he was not opposed to what Abhay had done. He thereafter arranged employment for Abhay as a department manager in a firm.

It was in 1922 that Abhay first met his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. When the master asked him why he did not preach Lord Chaitanya's message throughout the world, Abhay replied that first of all India must become an independent country; it cannot be done under British rule. But the master stated that the cause of Krishna consciousness did not have to wait until there was a change in the Indian political situation. All governments were temporary: the only eternal reality was Krishna consciousness. Real public welfare work should transcend temporal concerns and prepare a person for his next life and improve his relationship with God. After this meeting Abhay was convinced that the independence movement was just a temporary affair. That night Abhay accepted Thakura as his spiritual master. It was however years later, in 1932, that he was spiritually initiated by him. Abhay yearned to be a preacher himself as his master had ordered, but Abhay's wife, despite her religious inclinations, was opposed to such a course.

Abhay travelled a lot in north India as a pharmaceutical salesman. It occurred to him that if he became wealthy he should use the money to propagate his master's message.

One day Abhay was given an injunction by his spiritual master to print books, if he ever got money. This instruction had a deep impact on Abhay.

Although he provided for his wife and children in a Calcutta apartment, Abhay preferred to live away from them. He was not much interested in the selling of pharmaceutical goods because his heart
was in preaching. He tried to establish a spiritual movement in Jhansi after entrusting his Allahabad business affairs to his son. One day he received a telegram that his business house had been burgled. His servants had stolen, among other things, his money and medicines. A more worldly person would have been shocked or angered by such news but Abhay’s reaction was different. He was silent at first. Later he laughed and quoted a verse from the Bhagavatam to the effect that it was a merciful dispensation of Krishna to crush the material success of a sincere devotee. When a friend asked him to return to Allahabad, Abhay remarked that one great attachment had come to an end and that his life was now fully surrendered and dedicated to Sri Radha Krishna.

Abhay’s relationship with his family was becoming increasingly strained. That he was always talking about God was the complaint of his father-in-law. If he were to develop his Calcutta shop, his family would demand his earnings. Even if he were agreeable to their demands and stayed at home, the chief difficulty was that they were not serious about the devotional life. His wife and other family members would take tea in a separate room. His wife would not be of any assistance to him in the work of spreading Krishna consciousness. Abhay had often asked her never to drink tea as it is contrary to the practices of a strict Vaishnava family. When he told her that she must choose between him or tea, she replied jokingly that she will have to give up her husband then.

Her trading of Abhay’s copy of the Bhagavatam for tea and biscuits was the last straw. When he returned home and searched for the sacred book she informed him of what she had done. He was shocked and he left his family and business for good. This painful incident was a blessing in disguise as it precipitated the final severance of his remaining links with his family.

The 1950s were a particularly trying period. For some time he lived in an ashram in Delhi. Later he was on his own again. As a wandering mendicant he stayed in various temples or in the homes of pious people. He suffered from lack of bare necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter.

Undaunted, he devoted his time to writing and preaching. As he needed money to print the literature in his pos-
session he called on rich people, showed them his manuscripts and explained his mission. He did not succeed in collecting much money but had enough to resume publication of Back to Godhead, a magazine which he had started in 1944. This beautifully illustrated periodical is replete with learned and popular articles relating to Krishna consciousness. He not only read the proofs of this fortnightly publication but also walked around Delhi selling printed copies. He even mailed free copies to readers within India and overseas. His articles and editorials were critical of the rampant materialism of our time. He suggested a new way of living based on the acceptance of the supremacy of God.

Abhay decided to move to Vrndavana which is lovingly revered as the sacred place where Krishna lived some 5,000 years ago. Abhay wanted to live and write in the special atmosphere of Vrndavana with its many temples and pilgrims. It was there that he had a dream which intensified his missionary zeal. His guru Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, who had passed away far back in 1936, appeared in a dream and asked him to become a sannyasi. He regarded this as a reiteration of his guru’s earlier instruction that he should become a preacher of Krishna consciousness throughout the Western world. Abhay took the name Abhay Caranaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami after a formal sannyasa ceremony.

The Scindia Steamship Line made arrangements for Prabhupada to travel free of charge in one of their ships. The ship carried even extra vegetables and fruits for the vegetarian swami.

Thus, after many years of preparation, Prabhupada left India in August 1965 when he boarded this ship for New York City. He was leaving the shores of his native land for the first time at the age of sixty-nine. He came to America with a few personal effects and forty rupees! Although he was without material wealth his inner being was immensely rich with his unalloyed devotion to Krishna.

After arriving in New York Prabhupada started holding classes in an old loft. Downstairs he put up a small handwritten sign near the mailbox: “International Society for Krishna Consciousness”. At that time the Society was not very extensive. Today it has expanded to become an organisation of devotees from many nations and is truly a microcosm of a world united in devotion to Krishna.

When Prabhupada’s activities became better known, more and more young persons joined him at his small storefront for his morning and evening classes and devotional chanting.

Prabhupada instructed his disciples by discoursing daily on the Srimad Bhagavatam (a massive work of 18,000 verses) and also by discussing spiritual topics during his early morning walks.

One of his major literary projects was a translation with a commentary, of the Bhagavatam. He started work on this project in 1959 and by 1965 he had managed to publish the First Canto in three volumes. In all he was the author of more than 70 books, which have now been translated into more than 50 languages. His literary output was prodigious.
All the commentaries in his books, including that in his *Bhagavad Gita* are very traditional, being based on the texts of various earlier Vaishnava commentators. He succeeded in expressing the ancient devotional teaching in a readable modern idiom. His rendering of the *Bhagavad Gita* is probably more popular in the West than that of any other scholar. I vividly remember how eagerly several Hare Krishna devotees were trying to persuade me to buy this book at the Los Angeles airport of all places. These youngsters stop passers by at public places and speak to them about the greatness of Krishna and the importance of leading a truly religious life, wherein every action is performed as a service to Him. Students of religion and philosophy and devotees of Krishna in particular will always be indebted to Prabhupada for his many valuable books. Apart from the leading works already mentioned, his writings include *Beyond Birth and Death, The Science of Self Realization, Search for Liberation* and *The Path of Perfection*.

In his *Civilization and Transcendence* Prabhupada bemoans the plight of modern man. We are unfortunately living in Kali Yuga, the age of quarrelling and hypocrisy which, according to the *Bhagavatam*, is characterised by a sharp decline in religious devotion, truthfulness, cleanliness, tolerance, memory, bodily strength, duration of life and compassion. With a touch of humour he asks a rhetorical question: whereas a dog runs here and there on its four legs, you run on four wheels! Is that a sign of progress? Birds, beasts, insects and fish are only concerned with a few basic pursuits: Where is food? Where is sex? Where is shelter? How do we defend ourselves? It is a great pity that man is also more or less like the animals in this respect. What a waste of one’s life! Prabhupada teaches that Self-realisation is the purpose of Vedic civilisation. It is meant for the intelligent person who, having failed to find it in his previous lives, strives to achieve Self-realisation.

Prabhupada’s own observations on the subject of spiritual liberation are worthy of consideration. He describes the signs of liberation. A liberated person is very happy; he is never morose. He is free from anxiety and worry. Although he may be the poorest man in the world, he does not regard himself as being poor. We regard ourselves as poor or rich because we think that we are these material bodies with possessions to go with them. But the individual who does not have such a materialistic conception of life is indifferent to possessions. He realises that he has nothing to lose and nothing to gain. He does not view others as being rich or poor, educated or uneducated, beautiful or ugly and the like. His spiritual vision is such that he is outside the field of dualistic perception. Seeing every living entity as part and parcel of Krishna, he helps them to rediscover Krishna consciousness.

Prabhupada established more than one hundred temples in thirty-six countries. He personally instructed his disciples in the art of conducting all matters connected with the temple — cleaning it, holding classes and festivals, growing flowers for Krishna, keeping accounts and acquiring property for temples. He was a meticulous worker and a perfec-
tionist. Colourful statues of Krishna were placed in each of these temples. When Prabhupada stood before one of these he saw no statue of wood or stone but Krishna Himself in all His splendour, and he would bow before the Lord with tearful devotion.

Prabhupada passed away on November 14th 1977, leaving behind him the International Society for Krishna Consciousness which is a world-wide confederation of spiritual centres, schools, temples, institutes and farming communities. He will be remembered for having founded schools throughout the world based on the Vedic system of primary and secondary education. He inspired the construction of several large cultural centres in India, such as the one in Mayapur which is the site for a planned spiritual city in years to come. The Srila Prabhupada Memorial and Museum in his beloved Vrndavana is a worthy tribute to a pure soul who served the Lord with all his heart.

Seekers of God everywhere were naturally attracted to Prabhupada because they recognised that he was a spiritual leader of great charisma. Those who were disillusioned with the modern world with its wild pursuit of transitory pleasures were also fascinated by his philosophy of life. Here was a man who offered them an alternative lifestyle based on clean living and the love of Krishna. Extraordinary changes were noticeable in the lives of many who were influenced by Prabhupada: for example, meat-eaters became vegetarians; alcoholics and hallucinogenic drug takers dropped their addictions; atheists became believers and soon began singing the praises of Krishna. To the lonely and the lost who were leading aimless lives he showed that service of Krishna is life's purpose. It cannot be doubted that this wise man from the East brightened the lives of thousands and ushered in peace and joy for a whole new generation in the Western world and elsewhere.

Perfection
By Robert Goslin

Just be ; just be ; seek no identity.
Care not a whit to ask just where thou art,
Or what thou art — or even if thou art!
It matters not ; no import has it now.
For thou art naught — and naught thou shalt remain.
When thou art naught, thou surely shalt be One ;
And yet, when naught, thou surely shalt be All.
When thou art naught, thou surely shalt be found
But if not naught, thou surely shalt be lost.
Take naught from naught — and perfect shalt thou be.
The Garland of Guru's Sayings

By Muruganar

(Translation by Prof. K. Swaminathan)

Transcendence of Turiya (*Turiyatita*)

The sage whose ego is extinct
Is freed from the three seeming states
Of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.
All that remains for such a sage
Is *turiya*, the most noble state,
First, last and all-transcendent.

The one true state, pure Being-Awareness,
Is *turiya* which is all-transcending
And non-dual. The three transient states are mere appearances
Whose sole ground is the Self.

If the three other states were real
Then indeed would pure Awareness, Waking sleep, become the "Fourth".

Since in *turiya* those three states are seen as false appearances,
The Fourth is also that beyond The Fourth, *turiyatita*.

Counting waking, dreaming and deep sleep
As real states, one speaks of Waking Sleep
As *turiya*, the Fourth. But this is the sole real state of Being.
The three are false appearances.
The Fourth is also that beyond The Fourth, *turiyatita*.

This true and laudable awareness, *Turiya*, may be aptly named Grand Sleep that knows no waking, Or Eternal Wakefulness untouched By slippery sleep.
EMERSON wrote: "While the finite weeps, the Infinite lies in sleeping repose".

This wonderful truth, although repeated by the wise throughout the ages, is realized by few. Instead the human heart, that thirsty pilgrim, embarks upon an arduous quest in search of 'living waters', and consequently undergoes severe trials.

The pilgrim may be likened to the foolish fishes who dwelt in the sea and yet raised the question: 'What is water?'. It was only one 'filled with wisdom' who was able to dispel their delusion when he told them:

O ye who seek to solve the knot
Ye live in God, yet know Him not.
Ye sit beside the river's brink
Yet crave in vain a drop to drink.
Ye dwell beside a countless store
Yet perish hungry at the door.

So too, in order to restore the radiant lustre of truth, do saints and seers make their appearance in the desert of illusion in order to allay the thirst of weary travellers.

Such an oasis of peace was Ramana Maharshi, known to those who love him as Bhagavan, the Blessed One. Whether clothed in the garb of flesh or without it, Bhagavan remains for those who understand his teachings the ever luminous Presence.

Keen intellects came to him, their thought-rapier unsheathed and ready to thrust and parry, yet they were disarmed before his wisdom — a wisdom which outshone the fretful gleamings of those who sought to apprehend truth while yet 'addicted to much thinking'.

The pure in heart came to Bhagavan in the guise of adults, children and animals, and upon these grace was abundantly showered and appreciated.

There were also those who labelled themselves 'unbelievers'. They too found their way to Bhagavan, and a joyful surprise awaited them, for secret blooms appeared within them . . . .

As flowers and plants respond to light and air, so did hearts bask in that Presence.

It is also the privilege of the devotee to answer, as well as he is able, some pertinent questions regarding Bhagavan, whenever they arise:

Ramana Maharshi was a Hindu sage, was he not?

A sage is beyond the limitations of race and creed. He IS.

Was he in truth a teacher or Guru?

He who has no dream does not identify himself with the dreamer. To Bhagavan, there was no teacher, devotee or path.

It is said that Ramana Maharshi was a contemplative. What then of the active and bhakti paths?

Once again it is necessary to reiterate that for Bhagavan there were no “paths”, but the seeker who was unable to grasp and acknowledge this, was given individual guidance according to his inner development. Wisdom, love and activity are fused in perfect harmony when made manifest in a sage. A contemplative may “appear” inactive, but this is not so. Only the Self-realized one is intensely active, diffusing loving wisdom in never ending life-movement.

What practical use can we make of the Maharshi’s teachings in our daily lives?

More eloquent than words is the example of his life, for that alone is a magnificent guide. Added to that is the Self-enquiry, which may be used as the sword of wisdom in the spiritual life. So often we confuse ourselves by identifying Selfhood with the thoughts which whirl in the mind, but Bhagavan has indicated how we may disentangle ourselves from the web of illusion by the method of Who am I?

Confronted with this unflinching self-scrutiny, the mind or the bundle of thoughts which make up the mind, retreats. Relentlessly, with dauntless courage and perseverance the pilgrim must pursue this course until, as Bhagavan has so many times stated, it will be discovered that the spurious “I” or “ego” was all the time non-existent. When correctly applied Self-enquiry therefore reorientates the search for truth with unerring accuracy, setting the pilgrim’s feet firmly in the direction from whence he originally came. This is so when understood from a relative viewpoint, for the sage knows that both searcher and goal are mirages in the Eternal Now.

Why did Maharshi show so much concern for animals?

When the Blessed One walks among men, “ahimsa” or reverence for life is spontaneously carried out. Bhagavan by his example brought home to us the truth that love embraces all and rejects none. The smallest insect carries within its delicate frame the gift of life — and he who knows life to be ONE cannot destroy, but rather, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi: “walks in love for love”. According to the Hitopadesa “True religion is to love, as God loves them, all things whether they be great or small”.

We read in the Bible that ‘The foolish man’s heart is to the left; the wise man’s to the right.’

Bhagavan explained to those who enquired that the organ of the spirit, in other words, the centre of the spiritual life is the heart — that invisible Heart which many Catholics, for instance, are acquainted with as the Sacred Heart.

In all religions the true prayer-state is one where ‘heart and mind meet’ and
joining hands, enter the mystical holy silence.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi embraced all weary hearts, drawing them gently onwards towards this ecstatic haven of bliss.

Those who are already acquainted with the life and teachings of Maharshi will not wonder that such a being walked in our midst.

But to some who still imagine themselves to be only the 'body-mind', I would quote the words of Maurice Maeterlinck:

The more one gives the matter thought, the more it appears impossible that we should be only what we appear to be; ourselves only, complete in ourselves, isolated, separated, circumscribed by our physical body, our mind, our conscience, our birth and our death. We become truly possible and real only when we transcend all of these and prolong ourselves in space and time.

Heaven does not turn a deaf ear to the groaning of deluded man. Instead compassion wears a human garb to refresh the travailing heart with divine healing, and we can only gaze with grateful, tear-wet eyes at just such a manifestation, that of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Although the Presence discarded the earthly shell some years ago, the radiant face is recorded in photographic form; a gesture of loving mercy so that frail mortals may view the Beloved and seeing, feel the impact of 'something' so tender, so tolerant, so wise and so very beautiful in its infinite understanding...

Just as St. John of the Cross that great poet-mystic fumbled for words, stammering like a child before the majesty of his inner experience which he described as: 'I do not know what', so too are we rendered mute before the Indescribable when grace as Bhagavan opens the portals of the Holy Grove.

In the Eternal Now Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi continues to offer this supreme gift to all thirsty pilgrims — that of Heart-Eloquence which is born in the sacred silence of the divine.

When . . . I prayed with my heart, everything around me seemed delightful and marvellous. The trees, the grass, the birds, the earth, the air, the light seemed to be telling me that they existed for man's sake, that they witnessed to the love of God for man, that everything proved the love of God for man, that all things prayed to God and sang his praise.

— The Russian Pilgrim.
ESCIENCE of sleep is banished forever. The continuous experience of I AM is established firmly, uninterrupted by thoughts and blackouts of unawareness. This goes on without effort.

This results from rigorous practice. An unremitting vigilance must be steadily maintained in regard to one’s experience of ‘I’, the ego.

The ego is a compendium of sattva, rajo, tamo gunas. The tamo guna aspect is found in spells, long or short, of awareness during the periods of sleep or wakefulness. The rajo guna aspect is found during the phases of thought. These two aspects are rooted out effectively by the continued vigilance and grip on the ego, in terms of firm uninterrupted abidance in its sattva aspect of pure being experienced as I AM. One simply abides as pure AM.

For this, the enquiry “Who am I” is prescribed by our Lord and Master. This relentless enquiry nips in the bud the onset of thoughts and nescience alike. Thoughts are chased away. Nescience is wiped out. One is ultimately left in the state of awareness in its pristine purity. Sri Bhagavan’s Grace is ever with us to attain this condition. Abiding faith in His Word and devotion to the Blessed Feet of Lord-Guru-Ramana-Arunachala is the sole requisite.

One has no need to bother about, what for most people, appear to be obstacles to realisation, namely body and world. They are mere shadows which are bound to fade out in due course. For this Sri Bhagavan’s word of guarantee is with us. The efforts to banish the appearance of body and world by Hata yoga are totally unnecessary. To an extent they are obstacles to the attainment of Sahaja Samadhi. Why start with undesirable bhavana that body and world exist and then try to destroy that bhavana by Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi obtained by the practice of hata yoga? This line is certainly not for us, children of Blessed Guru Ramana!

Let us ‘be still’ as our Master has ordained. Let us merge in the continuous experience of the Pure-Ramana-Atma-Jyoti that we are! Appearance or disappearance of the shadows of body and world are quite immaterial!

(From a letter to the Late Sri. T.K. Sundaresa Iyer dated 21.1.63)
Waking and Dream States: An Analysis

By V. Dwaraknath Reddy

PROVIDENCE has bestowed upon us the capacity to sleep and to dream. The experience of the phenomena that we call dreams is a great boon vouchsafed to us. Thereby a benign Providence gives us relief from the drudgery of routine experiences prevalent in the waking state.

Dreams just happen; they are not willed. It is their peculiarity.

There can no dream of mine in which 'I' am not. I am there as a complete person. It may appear that I am different from the one in the waking state, but that does not mean that in the dream I am in any sense a false person or an incomplete person. The reality of 'me' to myself at any moment of time is total, whether I am dreaming or awake.

My dream-body too is a composite whole for the dream person that I am. The subtle actions of the sense organs such as sight, touch and hearing are intact as in the waking state. One does perform such actions as walking, talking etc. too in dreams. The mental modifications such as memory, doubt and joy are present. Nothing is lost or changed. In dreams there is also the sense of sequence pertaining to events. Effect follows cause as always.

When the dream is over and I return to my waking state, I am in the privileged position of having had experience of two planes of consciousness; the only common and consistent factor in them asserting itself is my BEING. The unbroken I-AM-ness persists throughout. Everything that qualified me, described me, or emanated from me, could have been at variance in the two states. Why, the time elements bore no resemblance to each other. A child and I were going into an ancient temple; the ages were six for the child, sixty for me, and six hundred years for the temple, but we came into being together in the instant. The scene shifted to a distant town or country, and the events spanned an extended period of time; yet on waking up it was evident that the dream had occupied but a few minutes. All this made no difference to my being.

The dream, no matter what distortions, anomalies or exaggerations it accommodated, was entirely a product of my mind. The propensities of my mind, evident or subliminal, shaped by my memories and preferences, fashioned the dream without any contribution or contamination from external factors. I, the waking one, must accept responsibility for the dream experiences.
Forgetfulness of the truth of myself through the mediation of sleep rendered possible the seeming reality of the phantom dream and therein I took myself to be indeed what I was in the dream. Every aspect of sensing, thinking or acting that could serve to prove my real presence there was readily available. But without primary forgetfulness the dream would not have been possible.

When I return to the state of wakefulness, there is no need to forget the dream. The higher reality of the waking state has no problem in containing the memory of the unreal dream. Thus it is seen that:

'T' the waking one alone am 'I' in the dream.

The dream 'I' cannot (while dreaming) recognise its identity with the waking-I, into whom it will resolve when the dream ends.

The higher truth of the waking consciousness causes and accommodates the fancies and fantasies of the dream consciousness. It has no confusion and no ignorance about its real identity. But, the lower plane is ignorant of the higher plane, and looks upon itself as a self-sufficient, permanent and real state.

Let us extrapolate the logic of these findings, derived by the same person from an experienced waking state and an experienced dream-state, to a hypothesis wherein this waking state of ours is posited as a continuing dream in relation to some as-yet-not-gained waking state. In such a scenario the following position emerges:

As I am now experiencing this life which we have equated to a "dream", I must be the one who will identify myself with the waking one when this dream ends.

I must have been that waking one who, succumbing to self-forgetfulness, got identified with the experiencer of this dream.

I as the waking one must have caused and concretized, out of the prowess of my whims alone, this shadowy dream world wherein ignorantly I believe the dream persons possess and manifest independent powers of willing and acting.

As I have no recollection now of that wakeful state leaving which I am in this dream state, all my speculations will only be a part of the dream.

When I regain my true state and identity as the waking one, the time-concepts and relationships of this dream will vanish — but nothing more can be rightly said by me now of that state as I can talk only in words and meanings and equa-

1 According to Bhagavan Sri Ramana the waking and dream states are not basically different from each other. The following is a quote from *Who am I?*

Devotee : Is there no difference between waking and dream?

Bhagavan : Waking is long and a dream short; other than this there is no difference. Just as waking happenings seem real while awake, so do those in a dream while dreaming. In dream the mind takes on another body. In both waking and dream states, thoughts, names and forms occur simultaneously.

— Editor.
tions that have validity within the dream frame.

In real terms, nothing has happened, to the truth of the waking one who remains as himself. To say that something has happened in "unreal terms" is of course meaningless.

'I' is not imaginary. Therefore it cannot be discarded or ignored. "I" who is now doing this act in the dream will be the one who, on waking up, will say "I was doing that act in the dream". No one else can say it; why, no one else will know anything about it! For this one is that one.

The instructions of Bhagavan Sri Ramana will certainly enable us to recognise this ultimate identity and comprehend the truth. Maharshi's instructions may be summarised thus:

Ask yourself "WHO AM I?". Be rid of the complacent conclusion that you are the person you have till now taken yourself to be, the individualised body-mind combine, functioning within a relativistic frame. Re-examine the evidence of the changes apparently taking place within you, liberate yourself from them, and find what is changeless, your pristine Being. The truth of you is even now available, through right understanding, for your experience. I-ness structured by thought, and locked in thought, is the ego. It is false. Unbroken 'I AM' is the truth.

My initial bewilderment, my perplexity at being totally ignored, slowly fade away as this strange fascination begins to grip me more firmly. But it is not till the second hour of the uncommon scene that I become aware of the silent, resistless change which is taking place in my mind. One by one, the questions which I prepared in the train with such meticulous accuracy drop away. For it does not matter whether they are asked or not and it does not matter whether I solve the problems, which have hitherto troubled me. I know only that a steady river of quietness seems to be flowing near me, that a great peace is penetrating the inner reaches of my being, and that my thought-tortured brain is beginning to arrive at some rest.

How small seem those questions which I have asked myself with such frequency! How petty grows the panorama of the lost years! I perceive with sudden clarity that the intellect creates its own problems and then makes itself miserable trying to solve them. This is indeed a novel concept to enter the mind of one who has hitherto placed such high value upon intellect.

— Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India*. 

This book provides a concise and general but very interesting and informative account of several Veerasaivite women saints who, with some exceptions, belonged to the twelfth century which was also the period of the socio-religious reformer Basavanna, the Prime Minister of King Bijala of the region known as Kalvana in the present Bidar District of Karnataka. The narrative is almost entirely based on or substantiated by vachanas or free religious verses in Kannada composed by the women saints themselves. The names of thirty-four of these saints are mentioned and one remains anonymous. They were either married or unmarried women and represented various castes, communities and professions, a few of them being even prostitutes.

The first half of the book is divided into eleven chapters while the remaining part contains excellent English translations (the author prefers to call them transcriptions) of the vachanas, arranged alphabetically under the names of the women saints, followed by a list of references and an index. The initial three chapters trace the origin and evolution of the Veerasaivite movement starting from Basavanna's time. Basavanna's sarcastic lyric on God parallels young Narendrā's (budding Śwāmi Vivēkānda's) revolt reaction after his early visits, prompted by Providence overpowering his scepticism, to Śrī Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa, as shown by his jibe that the cup was God, the chair was God etc! Basavanna and his followers, like the adherents of certain other religious groups, initially frowned upon the use and worship of icons, idols and other sacred objects and symbols but later started wearing them or using them in other ways. It is well to remember that, as Bhagavān Śrī Ramana Maharshi himself conceded, these have a role to play in the spiritual development of some individuals, as aids to mental concentration gradually leading to Self-awareness. Similarly, what at first started as a radical and reformist movement later came to grips with life's realities and, by slow transformation, adapted itself to a conformist position with regard to economic, occupational and social stratification. Chapters 4 through 11 deal with the ideological, mystic and social aspects of the lives of the women saints. In some places the author has incepted some of the vachanas, which by themselves may appear to be sacrilegious, in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis!

The few grammatical and spelling errors or inconsistencies in the book could have been eliminated by better proof correction, for example, 'Aydakki, Aydakki and Ayikakki for one and the same person; Mallikārjun and Mallikārjuna; and the oft-confused words practice and practise. Some of the vachanas are repeated, although in different contexts.

The price of this relatively small book may be considered high for most individuals wishing to buy it.

— Dr. T. Sankaran


The stress and strain of working-life in the midst of aggressive materialism and insatiable consumerism drive many people, specially from the educated middle class, to seek solace and mental peace in the proximity of saints and seers, listening to their sayings and clarifications. Śwāmi Ramana Maharaj of the Cosmic Contemplation Centre in Khurda Road, Orissa has provided spiritual inspiration and guidance to many devotees, across barriers of caste, community and religion. This book is a neat compilation of the Swamiji's sayings in the form of answers to several specific questions actually raised by devotees in their quest for spiritual enlightenment and peace. There are answers to 1008 questions, grouped into 10 chapters dealing with various matters and concepts including God, Guru, Mind, Body, Free will, Contemplation and Peace in worldly life. Swamiji's emphasis on the state of 'pure alertness' as the ultimate end of all contemplation and allied mental processes reminds us of the phrase 'choiceless awareness' frequently uttered by J. Krishnamurti.

Understandably there are no direct and definitive answers to questions on existence of God, Karma theory, rebirth, punishment for sin, and similar issues arising from assumptions of an ordered universe under a personalised God. The thrust in all the answers is that each individual has to study deeply his own mind, follow his own thoughts to their roots and then dissolve them to reach the state of 'pure alertness' which is the ultimate reality. Swamiji is emphatic in his assertion that God, God's Grace and Janmas are all imaginations of the mind. 'Closely monitor your thoughts. Don't condemn, don't praise and don't suppress', says Swamiji. He repeatedly states that all events take place according to the cosmic design and it is for each individual to become aware of the cosmic energy within himself by a process of contemplation. Several sayings remind us of the path of self-enquiry pointed out by Ramana Maharshi.

Some very pithy utterances of Swamiji bring out the core of his philosophy. Examples: Surrender is total acceptance without prejudice and inhibition. Ultimate serenity cannot be verbalised. True wisdom is that which reveals itself. A direct communion without communication is wisdom.

Swamiji's sayings include several specific guidelines for our conduct in daily life which will help our securing mental poise and peace. 'Let your consumption be minimum and contribution be maximum' is his advice to the seeker of freedom and peace.

Prayer and meditation are spiritual exercises practically common to several religions. As a guide for focused analysis of the restless mind, this book has a universal relevance and appeal and as such will be a welcome addition to the library of any sat sang.

— C.V. Narasimhan

Tradition ascribes the authorship of the Mahabharata to sage Vyasa of antiquity who felt that abstract metaphysics of the Vedas and the Upanishads were too abstruse for the sage Vyasa of antiquity who felt that abstract metaphysics of the Vedas and the Upanishads were too abstruse for the masses to comprehend. Hence, it is said, he took upon himself the task of composing a scripture that was highly interesting with fascinating stories and practical wisdom that would gradually lead one’s mind to the deeper spiritual truth of life.

The events and persons described in the great epic may be partly historical, justifying to its reference as itihāsa (history), but then there is the unmistakable stamp of its author using them more to drive home supra-mundane and spiritual themes. The question however is what is its real spirit? For, to vivisect the awe and majesty of the overriding religious themes. The question however is what is its real spirit? For, to vivisect the awe and majesty of the overriding philosophical implications ingrained allegorically in the powerful events of this great epic. For the Swamiji, Yudhishthira’s staking and losing of life on the royal game of dice everything including his wife “for the sake of righteousness” is “a dramatic portrayal of the development of a high degree of vairagya in an aspirant”, rather than the obvious and convincing moral of the folly of gambling to which the author skips even a casual reference (p.92-3). The 13-year long self-exile of the Pandavas is nothing but “ego-effacing measures” indicative of their “insight into the righteousness and the ultimate goal of victory” (p.132-3). Yudhisthira’s resorting to falsehood to destroy the invincible Dronāchārya in the battle-field was a “Divine Process” by which Lord Krishna brought out Yudhishthira’s “weakness in his understanding of truth” and “thereby helped him to purify his unconscious more effectively” (p.186-9). Likewise, the poignant scene of curses hurled at Yudhishthira and the heart-rending wailings of grief-stricken women from both sides on seeing their dear ones’ corpses lying shattered in the battle-field after the end of the Kurukṣetra war is serenely commented on as “symbolic of the changes that occur within the human mind during the course of spiritual evolution and at the time of enlightenment ... representing negative and positive impressions in the unconscious (samstāras) as well as subtle desires (vēsanas) and thought waves (vrittis)” (p. 221-5).

The book is replete with such attempts at de-mystifying the rich, moral insight provided in the colloquy between Krishna and Arjuna. For, the Mahabharata is an epic of action, and the Gita endorses action. The myth and mysticism of the timeless doomsday epic lies in its bewildering shades of philosophy of life that haunt the reader at once in tune and out of tune with the mood and predilection with which one reads. In the form of tales and powerful events, the myth touches on a person’s basic relations to his or her world and fellow-beings in the march of Time hand in hand with Destiny. In a sense, therefore, the hard core of the epic addresses itself to the problem of identity, asking: “Who am I?”.

A redeeming feature, however, is the excellent summary, in 250 pages, of the epic in a lucid and crisp language while skillfully extricating the narrative from the maze of interlocking stories.

— La Su. Rengarajan


This book is of the utmost importance to those who would study in detail the various forces that flourished almost unchecked and, were indeed, at times aggressively stimulated, encouraged and prostituted for the meanest, the grossest, the vulgar, sectional and political ends by gangs, too numerous to be separately identified here, whose one professional passion was and alas! is to beware large numbers of their less intelligent followers and achieve power and — wealth for themselves. The issues the author discusses are of compelling contemporary relevance and importance. We are not suggesting that rational refutation of the aggressive "isms" that stalk naked and unashamed in this country will lead to their disappearance. Alas! The situation is too bleak to warrant any such hope. The beneficiaries of separatist cults in India are not, alas! never, the people alleged to be the victims of oppressive higher castes. The beneficiaries are the organisers of these structured isms, if we may coin a word, expert operators in mass bamboozlement, gangs and gangs of whom are to be found flourishing in our outrageously debased public life today. No nation, with a heritage of culture as rich as India’s has been so monstrously corrupted and spiritually destroyed as Indian society since the fateful dawn of our so-called ‘swaraj’. One wonders what would have happened if Gandhiji were alive today and fasted unto death in stern and strenuous opposition to the gang of self seekers, unscrupulous adventurers, political criminals and goondas who seem to find power easy to win and office an opportunity of uncontrolled self-aggrandisement and self-enrichment.

The Aryan-Dravidian controversy has bedevilled Indian life ever since foreigners started writing histories of India. And alas! their Indian counterparts are equally busy fanning the flames of hatred, tribe-wise, caste-wise and religion wise. A female historian writes a history of India, claiming to be a Marxist by faith, almost as if she had moved round the earliest ages of India in a time machine of her own devising. A much
reputed scholar dismisses the Ramayana story of the Adityam done by Rishi Bharadwaja to Bharata as based on hoarded stocks of grain! The Aryan myth has survived the vigorous scholarly repudiation of it largely because of political handling by the latest criminal tribe, the politician.

Dr Elst has a Roman Catholic background but one is delighted to find him speak as frankly as he does about the seamer side of Christian missionary effort. The brunt of the latest criminal tribe, the politician.

Caste is and has always been the bane of Indian society: caste based on birth alone and totally heedless of the gunas and karmas which Lord Sr Krishna regarded as the proper basis of any intelligent function of ordered effort. The brunt of Indian patriots was however pushed into the political wilderness by Nehru because he dared to criticize Nehru's monstrous blunder in regard to Islam. Tibet and China and we are still paying the price of a Nehru foreign policy conceived in ignorance and folly and worked out by a gang of arrogant buffons to the point which has left India a totally friendless country.

Caste is and has always been the bane of Indian society: caste based on birth alone and totally heedless of the gunas and karmas which Lord Sr Krishna regarded as the proper basis of any intelligent function of ordered effort. Long ago, Rabindranath Tagore told his Japanese audience, in his now forgotten book Nationalism that caste was the central problem India had to face. Caste breeds poverty, jealousy, arrogance and everything that is calculated to destroy human values. We deny access to our precious spiritual heritage to non-Brahmana Hindus, on the absurd ground that the Vedas can only be properly chanted and understood by the three principal varnas at the top. The three varnas don't exist today. We have Brâhmans who, so far as the vast majority are concerned, don't read, chant or adhere to the Veda. Those who want the Veda confined to a small minority little realize that blind chanting, without understanding of the purport and meaning, is from any rational standpoint ridiculous. To stress sound and ignore sense is to insult the Veda.

The book under review raises many issues of vital importance to Hindu and Indian society and exposes the mischief wrought by alien forces working in the name of their particular religions and setting themselves the goal of conquest of a disintegrated India. We have been warned! Alas! Not for the first time!

— Prof. S. Râmaswâmi.


SOUL TO SOUL, pp 112 + x

All four books by Swâmi Ishwarânanda Girî, Samvît Sâdhanââyana, Santasarovar, Mount Abu 307 501.

These four books by Swâmi Ishwarânanda Girî, display the Swâmi's erudition, far-reaching exegetical abilities, poetical expression, and a storehouse of anecdotes drawn from both scriptures and his personal experiences.

Divine Master deals with the symbolism of Dakshinamurti and the significance thereof. The text is composed of 108 names of Dakshinamurti and the Swâmi's commentary on the same. The presentation of the many, varied interpretations that can be gleaned from the names is very well done and ranges from visualized images to pure Advaita, e.g. tapanâdûpa-lochanah (v. 58), "He who has the sun and moon as his eyes", is also explained as, "The Lord of the sun and moon may also mean that, day and night. He is the witness of everything, of all phases of things bright and dark." The shortcomings are few, those who are familiar with Védanta may have no difficulty with "samvit" "Brahma-drishti", "upasana", etc., but no translation at all of these terms and many others may place portions of the text out of reach of many who would otherwise benefit from them.

The Wheel and the Web is a commentary upon 10 verses from the sixth chapter of the Svâtatsvatara Upanishad.
Emphasising the first 5 of those verses. The commentary is based on the notes of 7 lectures delivered by the author in Bangalore in 1973. The book is written in a personal, warm style and is filled with appropriate anecdotes drawn from scriptures and the author’s own experiences.

*Paradivata—God, the Mother* gives thoughtful nondual interpretations to the symbolism surrounding the Divine Mother. With many references to the compositions of Adi Sankara, this book will be useful for those who are inclined toward the feminine representations of God and who wish to understand them in a manner that is more in accord with Advaita than what may often be encountered. The chapter entitled, “Atma-Devata” expresses a very high view quite clearly and is replete with references to Sri Ramana Maharshi and the path of *atma-vichara* (Self-inquiry). The chapter entitled, “Yoga-Devata” discusses prana and kundalini, with an attempt to amalgamate the latter with Vedanta. “Shiva-Devata” focuses on detachment from the body, worldly things, and blood relationships. “Pratyaksha-Devata” contains discussions of views of what the experience of the world is. The author’s interpretation of Sankara’s verses here, though common enough are not purely Advaita (nondual) in nature and thus represent more his own experience than that of Adi Sankara. In the light of the Maharshi’s teachings, Sankara’s words can be understood and experienced in a more nondual, or more consistently nondual, way. However this will not detract from the enjoyment that many seekers will obtain from this small work.

*Soul to Soul* being extracts from correspondence with one Smt. Anasuyaben Sarabhai, the writing contained in this book is of personal, instructional nature. Topics discussed are the importance of Self-realization, the unreality of bondage, the nature of bliss, passion, anger and greed, how to attain fearlessness, seeing the limitless Consciousness in all sensations, dispersion in the midst of everyday life, and love, devotion and faith. Destruction of vāsanas is expressed with a good amount of Advaita orientation. Methods of *ashtāṅga* yoga are described, which remain at a mental level, and no actual description of inquiry into the Self is offered.

All of the above books will be of interest to those involved in *ashtāṅga* yoga who yearn for a nondual approach to the same, to those who enjoy reading about devotion with an eye toward union with the Supreme, for those interested in Vedānta, Siva, and the Divine Mother in general, and, of course followers of the Swami himself. It is evident from the consistent content of all these writings that Śvāmī Ishwarananda Giri is a very holy man endowed with a deep faith in the sanctity and profundity of Advaita Vedanta and its sages and lives an inspiring life filled with devotion, knowledge, and love for his fellow beings.

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This is a collection of various lectures given by Śvāmī Satprakashānanda of Rāmakrishna order on the very fascinating subject ‘mind’. Śvāmīji in his lectures explains the subtle nature of mind, its relation with the senses and soul or Self, the mysterious ways of its functioning, the subject of purification of mind and the steps to be taken for mind control. According to Vedanta, impurities do not inhere in the mind; but only adhere. Hence purification is possible. Since mind is the store house of impressions (vāsanas) there is a vital need for being careful when gathering impressions.

It is mind that makes or mars an individual’s happiness. One’s own mind is one’s friend or foe. The book shows the ways and means to make the mind a permanent friend and ensure happiness and peace in one’s life. It also throws light on the transcendent subject of *śamāthi* or superconsciousness.

This is a valuable book for everybody and especially for those who want an insight into their mind.

— N. S. Krishnan

**THE HEART OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION:** by Ven. Nyanaponika Thera.


The present trimmed BPS edition of the well known *Heart Of Buddhist Meditation* has a printing history that dates back to 1962 when published first by Rider & Co. Despite the class of persons for whom it is written, as the title indicates, it impresses itself on the eager attention of others as well. What makes one, Buddhist or not, admire and adhere to Ven. Nyanaponika Thera’s book is the way it takes the meditator deep within himself through the practice of Mindfulness (*satipatthana*).

Man ekes his life without much thought about his true nature. His mind under a strain becomes unfit to judge great things. The book bids him first to relax the mind through bare impressions. It is mind that makes or mars an individual’s happiness. His mind under a strain becomes unfit to judge great things. The book bids him first to relax the mind through bare impressions.

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The message of the Buddha, as conveyed by the Ven. Thera in Part II based on Mahā-Satipatthāna-Sūtra, and other translated texts (Part III) from the Pāli Canon lifts untrained minds from the dungeon of ignorance and assists them to be in the presence of infinite knowledge. From first to last the book speaks reassuringly about a vision of peace and delight. No wonder it continues to remain an authentic and official handbook of meditation among the Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist practitioners.

— R. Rāmasāmi

101 STORIES FOR YOU AND ME: by J.P. Vāswnāi pp.191 Rs 35

JOY AND PEACE PILLS: by J.P. Vāswnāi pp. 197

IT'S SO WONDERFUL: Life and teachings of Dāda: ed. by Ms. K.K. Thandāni pp.274

INTERVIEWS AND INNER VIEWS—Conversations with Dāda: by various writers
All four published by MIRA Publications, Sadhu Vāswnāi Road, Pune 411 001.

The above books centre around Dāda J.P. Vāswnāi. A student of physics, his dissertation for the Master's degree is stated to have been evaluated by Dr. C.V. Raman. From physics to spirituality was quite a transition for J.P. Vāswnāi—made easy by the inspiring example of his uncle and Guru, Sadhu T.L. Vāswnāi, the well-known savant of Sindh.

The first of the above books contains short and illuminating stories—all of which are eminently readable. The second book has very valuable practical tips on such matters as overcoming tension, temptation, fear etc. as also on techniques of meditation. The whole approach advocated is to take a positive attitude towards everything and not to lose touch with God. Vāswnāi advocates setting apart some time each day for 'silence' and what he calls "an appointment with God". The tips are useful and likely to prove effective.

The third book is a tribute to J.P. Vāswnāi on the occasion of his Platinum Jubilee (2 August 93). It is brought out by St. Mira's College for Girls, Pune of which he was Principal (1962-1976). The book also has a section called "Make Your life more meaningful" where most of the ideas expressed in the second book mentioned above are repeated. This book could do with better proof reading (pp.128, 154, 156 and 266). The last book again is a collection of pieces by various writers—mostly interviews—about J.P. Vāswnāi.

A large degree of overlapping, repetition of ideas etc. is inevitable in books of this kind. One of the interesting points made by Vāswnāi is that "meditation and contemplation are not meant to be practised by all. Meditation implies a certain measure of concentration which does not belong to everyone". Those who despair of their inability to meditate can take heart from the observation coming as it does from a spiritual leader.

— Pingali S. Sundaram


Mr. Davis is a direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda. His book is divided into two sections. The first gives a brief account of his childhood leading up to his encounter with Yogananda and the subsequent discipleship, followed by the creation of his own group independent from the Self-Realisation Fellowship. The narrative is a disappointment when one considers the core of his story is his guru, Yogananda. One suspects Mr. Davis's book is a collection of transcripts from his talks. There is a curious lack of verve in his reminiscences—it is more like an accountant's itemisation, and as a consequence this book fails. On the other hand, Donald Walters (a.k.a. Swami Kriyananda) in his autobiography The Path (Autobiography of a Western Yogi) gives a wonderful, passionate description and feeling of what it was to be associated with Yogananda. Presumably in his talks, Mr. Davis is able to convey the rasa, the taste, of his association with his master, otherwise why bother to speak at all? The second part of Mr. Davis's book is a rehash of the theory and practice of Yoga which is couched in a language suitable for American beginners. It is direct, succinct and intelligible.

The cherubic photographs of a young Mr. Davis as a member of the S-R Fellowship have to be seen to be believed. Such innocence!

— Peter Picqilmann


For those who seek answers there are plenty here. Brunton explains the logic behind and implications of karma, meditation, evil, asceticism and much more. What he does not do is explain where his answers come from, and his sources are indeed diverse. Theosophy, Masonry, Christianity, Hinduism and others have made an identifiable impact on his thought, but these influences are not attributed. Brunton speaks as one who has completed the path and systematised it, but his authority is assumed not justified. He uses his own terms such as 'Overself' which seems to be equivalent to 'soul', but these terms need to be explained the first time they are used.

This is a diverse collection of essays from many different periods. Brunton travelled widely and much of what he wrote was a response to his current experience—there are many references to the Second World War. One of the downfalls of this collection is that each piece is undated. His ideas undoubtedly changed and developed over time, but without dates or chronological ordering it is impossible to see the course of his development and repetition also occurs. On the other hand, one cannot overlook the groundbreaking contri-
bution of this Western pioneer and synthesiser who did so much to make the spirituality of India familiar to those outside.

At the time he wrote there was a lack of sophisticated studies of Eastern religious traditions on their own terms in Western languages. Therefore some kind of overview and synthesis was probably appealing. It is good to see how far we have come. Nowadays a specialised study of a particular tradition is possible, one which understands and does not overlook each tradition's unique ideas and practices.

— Sānyāśī


This is the story of a little known movement of renewal within the mediaeval Christian Church of Europe, of an attempt by the Church to reform itself before being overtaken by the Reformation.

The monastic movement begun by St. Benedict in the sixth century had become effete and rather worldly towards the year 1400. Nowhere more so than in Flanders. In an attempt to get back to the Christian ideal, the Flemish mystic Jan Ruysbroeck (1297-1385) had established an unconventional monastery in the forest of Groenendaal near Brussels. Parly inspired by Ruysbroeck, the founder of this movement, Gerard Groote (1340-1384), established several lay monasteries or 'Brotherhouses' to bring Christianity into the common life of the people. These Brotherhouses became, as the monasteries had once been, workshops in which the brothers themselves were the raw material. Central to their effort was the question 'Who am I?'. They sought to resolve the previous imbalance between the active and contemplative lives in a 'third life' or via apostolica as exemplified by Christ himself. They also evolved a system of spiritual exercise derived from the Desert Fathers. This approach became known as the 'New Devotion'.

In England, the movement linked a number of familiar names including those of Rolle, Hylton, More and Erasmus. The Devoto Moderna, moreover, produced a wealth of spiritual treatises and publications. Among these were the anonymous Myroure of Oure Ladye and several works written by Richard Whytford for the focus of the New Devotion in England, the Bridgettine Convent of Syon (the last pre-reformation monastic foundation in England - 1415).

The influence of the New Devotion has been deep and pervasive. This can be seen not least in the The Imitation of Christ of Thomas à Kempis, one of the movement's early luminaries; while part of this fascinating story is the way in which the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius can be seen as merely another step in 'a process of transmission that had already passed through the Brotherhouses and Convents of the New Devotion'. How the movement interacted with Humanism and Platonism to colour the thought of the Renaissance is also carefully examined.

This book is of great interest for the way it reveals the advaita implicit in mystical Christianity. Take these words from the Meditations of St. Bernard: "He that seeketh the ymage of God in himself... fyndeth and knoweth it in every man... I finde in my soul the Ymage of the high and glorious trinity... turn again and remember yourself. The works of St. Bernard were extensively adopted by the New Devotion, a devotion which emphasised attention to the heart through Self-knowledge.

Although the subject matter of this book is compelling it is not easy to read. It is uncompromisingly scholarly with pages of footnotes, though the effort required is richly rewarded. It is uplifting and has about it a sweetness, an integrity and purity. I do recommend it.

— Aecadair Black


"The natural consequences of an experiential presentation of Advaita Vēdānta... is to disengage it from its cultural contingencies and to unencumber it from its religious baggage." The author states that his book "is intended for those who have a fleeting or nodding acquaintance with Hindu thought or a curiosity about it... but have also wondered whether this body of thought has anything to do with the daily experience of living."

Dr. Sharma achieves this aim and demonstrates what in the final analysis is the ultimate purpose of Advaita Vēdānta doctrine—that of a personal, practical and life transforming 'experience' of a non-dual creation. He removes all technical Sanskrit terms and cultural expressions except for those absolutely essential to the point he is making. He presents an in-depth analysis of life, its three primary states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleeping and their relevance to daily living with the precision of a surgeon. In addition, he clearly differentiates the "doctrinal" philosophy of Advaita Vēdānta which emphasises the affirmation of the existence of a non-dual reality, with the "experiential" dimensions of perfect identity with the non-dual reality.

In presenting this "experiential" dimension, Dr. Sharma draws directly from the published experiences of two of the most widely accepted modern day spokesmen of the Advaitic experience—Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. In Part I he explores the question "What is normal experience?" He then critiques, compares, and draws conclusions of normal experiences in relationship to the Advaitic experience of non-duality. Part II investigates other approaches to normal experience, reconciles them with the Advaitic experience, and explores this experience and its practicality in daily living. He completes this second part with documented statements of direct experience by Sri Ramana Maharshi and Maharaj. In addition, he has added some documented experiences of Paul Brunton.
This book, a significant, meaningful, and relevant contribution to Advaitic literature, will most likely serve the awakening process of a serious student. Of the hundreds of books published on Advaita Vedanta, it is refreshing to read a book that is something other than the typical doctrinal analysis rehashing academic commentaries on top of commentaries. Congratulations, Dr. Sharma. Your book is a must for all teachers and serious students of Advaita — both academic and non-academic — and certainly would be a must for any complete library of Advaitic teachings.

— Chandrashekhar (A. Roy Horn)


Consciousness Writes is a book excerpting some of the letters exchanged between Ramesh S. Balsekar and his disciples. Balsekar teaches Advaita with an emphasis on understanding and intellectual insights.

Adapting and giving his interpretation of the teaching of Nisargadatta Maharaj, his guru, he writes in a letter:

“The Totality of Manifestation is an appearance in consciousness like a dream. Its functioning is an impersonal and self-generated process in phenomenality; and the billions of sentient beings are merely instruments (dreamed characters without any kind of volition) through which the impersonal process taken place. The clear apperception of this truth means the irrelevance of the individual human being as a seeker, and therefore Enlightenment . . . .

“TQ, in all this thinking, the dominant factor is the thinker, the experiencer, the doer. There is truly no such character. Unless this is deeply realised, the experience will continue to suffer . . . . Any effort to try and remember this understanding is an obstruction. Just leave it alone and the understanding will work.”

The letters reveal Balsekar’s friendly, easy, and supportive relationship with his disciples, several of whom communicate back their insights and “awakening.” Balsekar often affirms their “transformation” and congratulates them.

The stated primary aim of this book is to elucidate the Guru-disciple relationship. However, organising and editing makes it all less interesting and enjoyable to read as the context and the immediacy of the letters is lost.

— Suresh Jain


DIALOGUES ON REALITY: by Robert Powell. 1996, pp 223, $14. Both Published by: Blue Dove Press, P.O.Box 261611, San Diego, CA 92196, USA.

Maharaj is a unique phenomenon of modern times. His guru Sri Siddharamshwar planted in him the seed, “You are the Parabrahman, and not anything that is experienced.” The disciple identified totally with this and let it come to fruition of its own. Maharaj taught that the world including the body, and consciousness, are both inter-dependent. This sense of presence therefore vanishes along with the body and the world during dreamless sleep. This consciousness is however the only ‘capital’ one has, to work on, for the present. All of one’s knowledge is built around it. One knew oneself wordlessly as I am before learning the words ‘I am’ and even prior to that, before learning one’s name as pointing to this. Maharaj refers to this as ‘I-am-ness’. “The only primary capital that anybody has is this: deep sleep, waking state and that little touch of ‘I-am-ness’, nothing else . . . . And you are also not that ‘I am’. It is the taste or fragrance of this food body. The ultimate you has no fragrance, no taste, no touch of ‘I-am-ness’ . . . . (p.133). Staying put with this sense of presence, being friendly with this beloved, the love to be, leads to the witnessing of it. This witnessing principle is termed by Maharaj as Isvara or Brahman when there is manifestation, and as Parabrahman when there is none.

All approaches to Truth boil down to this: is there anyway the individual in the dream can induce a waking-up from it? Maharaj guarantees that staying put with the ‘I-am-ness’ induces it. He points out that the individual is an integral unit of food-body, life-force and consciousness doomed to disintegration in the relentless flux, like all other such perceived units. One’s manipulations to survive change ought to be witnessed as a no-win struggle against cosmic flux. “The I-am-ness does not have the exclusive authority to perpetuate itself.” On the other hand the dreaming-consciousness is not dependent on the individual I or the others within the dream. The I in the dream has to be with its essence, ‘I-am-ness’, every available dream-moment to induce the witnessing that precedes the waking up. Maharaj is clear that nothing further need be done; that the fruit ripens in such sunlight. Maharaj, though unwell and weak, dramatises for our benefit, an enquiry into the situation of his imminent death (p.156). It is thrilling reading Maharaj the vidhānākṣā performing the funeral rites of Maharaj the jīvanmukta! The discourse on p.2 is like a sacred initiation into witnessing. The seeker needs nothing more from without, to get down to abiding, happy practice.

It is pertinent to point out here that the practice of ‘staying put’ with the ‘I-am-ness’ as described by Maharaj is identical with Self-enquiry in its subtle phase of “attending to the I-thought”, as described by Sri Ramana. When one is consumed by this stage of dynamic stillness, sphurana, then a ripening, as described by Maharaj, and a dissolving as described by Maharsi occurs. The sudden ‘dropping’ of the ripe fruit, according to Maharaj, is sung by the other as the sudden “appearance” of the ‘I-I of its own accord (Upādāśa Sāram 20).

Those like the reviewer who were vouchsafed Maharaj’s intimacy will agree that Frydman’s I Am That remains
unsurpassed in its nascent purity in giving one the direct experience of Mahârâj, the loving bully, the transcendent bird, the fledgling to take the 'leap'. Balsekar's Pointers is a classic capturing the light of the teaching (as lived and pointed to so well by his Guru) in the camera of the intellect and laid out in a brilliant synthesis; great help along the way. The Experience of Nothingness contains some carefully compiled talks of the Master during the final year of his body's dissolution through throat-cancer. The wide range of topics earlier allowed by the Master as material for his daily Socratic surgery was narrowed down by him, to a tight focus towards his end. Powell's Experience therefore joins in importance the two mentioned above. Mahârâj divulges in this book why he rarely agreed with a questioner, and why on and off he instructed some to leave. Mahârâj's interpreter ought to have been named in the book.

In his own Dialogues on Reality, Powell comes a cropper. There is a group discussion of sorts going on all the time with Powell moderating. In each chapter an aspect of reality is taken up and using references from the Maharshi, Mahârâj, JK, UG or others, there is much polite discussion and sharing of concepts, in a free-for-all of philosophers which leaves the poor reader feeling like a one-eyed prisoner in the care of the blind, e.g., a questioner asks, "What is 'isness'?" and a two-and-half page reply is given. So much for the immediate sense of one's presence!

The reviewer is tempted to observe that in life an insight or two approaching the Beyond is given to all. Very few recognise it. Fewer than a few make its quest their priority. After diligent application, and by the grace of the Guru, glimpses of the Beyond are again received. It is a rare few among these souls who still persevere — and persevere they do — in the anonymity vital at this stage. They thus let the ripening run its full course. As for the others, the psyche-intellect effects the heady synthesis it is always capable of. The captured knowledge is shared with others who receive it as the real thing — for a while. In the adulation that follows, the individual succumbs to the 'guru-trip' manipulated by his own vâsanâs which survive hidden in the spiritual stagnation that they occasion. In this scenario it is not difficult to see why Masters like Mahârâj and Sri Ramana could get judged (by those still in search!) as being 'elusive' or 'difficult to grasp'. Indeed, the Masters speak from the realm beyond capture. What they affirm now as true for a questioner at one level, the individual dismisses or reduces (the Guru-trip) as an empty thing — or difficult to grasp. They thus do not judge the Masters and their teachings as 'elusive'.

The captured knowledge is given to the ignorant masses, and you have a chance to become a guru. With that knowledge you originally had, plus the knowledge you have heard, and the knowledge which had sprouted in you, when you finally understand and realize all that, you definitely will come to the conclusion that it is all unreal, of no use. Nevertheless having realized that, you will have a certain stature in spirituality and people will flock to you, listen to what you say. At that stage whatever occurs to you, you can just blurt it out. Because for the ignorant masses that will be profound knowledge. But in the bargain you will be elevated to a very high stature: as a guru. So beware of that.

The sadguru being everywhere, shows through such teachers what the seeker must avoid — reducing the holy quest into another career, and finally, one's followers into a personal insurance against the physical discomforts, the loneliness and fear of age, dotage and death.

— J. Jayaraman

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BOOKS RECEIVED


AKSHARA MANA MALA: Sanskrit verse (in Skt/Tel script) by Sankara Sarma, Kavya Katha Peetam, Visakhapatnam, 530002.

YOGA, Mind & Body: pp 168, £17

THE COMPLETE ILLUSTRATED BOOK OF YOGA: pp 359, $16.


THE AXE OF GOD: Drama - tization based on T. N. Ramachandran's Purapurrari. TNR Publ. 5D, Selvam Nagar, Tanjavur 613007.
Celebration of 117th Jayanthi of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

At Ashram (26-12-96)

The celebrations at the Ashram were on the usual lines. The Ramana Auditorium was decorated with flowers on a massive scale.

The Ramananjali group, Bangalore, led by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan gave an impressive concert of devotional music on the evening of the 25th.

Group singing of Tamil hymns on and by Sri Bhagavan during the early hours of the 26th marked the commencement of the proceedings. 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 Mahanyasa Ekadasa Rudrabhisheka and special puja to Ramaneswara Mahalingam the final harati came off at eleven.

Visitors and devotees were then treated to special lunch. The poor were fed on a large scale.

The evening concert of devotional music by Smt. Sakkubhai Srinivasan of Bangalore and party was well received by devotees.

At Delhi

The Ramana Kendra, Delhi celebrated the Jayanthi on 26-12-96. The main item of the programme was Vedic chanting.

Subsequently, on 19th January 1997, a public meeting was arranged. The meeting was addressed by Dr. Gauri Shankar and Sri T.N. Chaturvedi. A film on Sri Bhagavan was also screened.

At Tadpatri

Jayanthi was celebrated for 5 days between 26th and 30th December by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram, Tadpatri.

Public meetings were arranged on all these days. Ashram President Sri. V.S. Ramanan took part in the proceedings on the 29th and 30th. The Bharata Natyam programme on the evening of the 29th and the feeding of the poor on the 30th were special features.

Aradhana of Chinna Swamigal

The Aradhana of Chinna Swamigal was celebrated on 23rd January.
When It Rained, It Poured
Surely the gods were pleased. A local farmer said that it hadn’t rained like this since his son was a baby, and that was eighteen years ago. A passionate tree-planter reckoned that it amounted to ten years worth of rainfall. Neither was exaggerating. For ten days and nights in December, soon after Deepam, it rained virtually nonstop. In three days the Samudram Lake was filled to overflowing, and the waters thundered over the dam for a fortnight (see cover). Although normal life was disrupted, there was no major disasters. We present a selection of views around the Mountain, recorded soon after the event.
Inauguration of Ramana Shrine and Meditation Centre at Alamelumangapuram, Madras on December 13, 1996.
(Please see Jayanthi 1996 Issue for Report)

Swami Shantananda performing harati to Sri Bhagavan.

Sri B. Ananthaswami being honoured on the occasion by Swami Ramanananda

Celebration of Centenary of Sri Bhagavan’s Advent at Arunachala At Madurai

A four-day celebration between 14th and 17th June 1996 was organised at Madurai jointly by the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore and Ramana Kendram, Madurai.

On the 14th afternoon a seminar was conducted. The seminar was inaugurated by Swami Ramanananda by lighting a kuthu-vilakku. Sri. V.S. Ramanan, President, Sri Ramanasramam delivered the inaugural address. Other speakers were: Swami Sahajananda (Bangalore), Sri Balakumaran (Chennai), Dr. Sarada (Bangalore), Dr. T.N. Pranartitharan (Madurai) and Sri. A.R. Natarajan (Bangalore). This was followed by Ramana Music by the Ramananjali group, Bangalore. Subsequently there was a dance-drama depicting scenes from the life of Sri Bhagavan.

On the 15th all the devotees made a trip to Tiruchuli.

On the 16th and 17th June a spiritual training workshop was organised at the Ramana Mandiram in which 75 devotees took part. Classes were conducted by Sri. A.R. Natarajan, Swami Sahajananda and Dr. Sarada. Dr. T. N. Pranartitharan and Dr. Kala Rangaswamy gave talks. With group discussion etc. the workshop provided a great opportunity to devotees to get clarifications on spiritual matters.
Vijnana Ramaneeya Ashram, Palghat

Vijnana Ramaneeya Ashram, Palghat, founded by Swami Sureshananda in 1948, has an impressive record of service in spiritual causes. Its activities are many-sided.

At a function organised on April 20, a library and research centre constructed by the Ashram was opened by Swami Satchidananda of Anandashram, Kanhangad. The Swami also inaugurated the construction of a guest house by laying the foundation stone.

At the same function Swami Ramanananda of Sri Ramanasramam formally opened a guest house gifted by the Ashram to an old destitute lady on humanitarian grounds. In addition the Swami also released a souvenir.

Sri Vidya Havan

This annual function which forms part of the worship of Sri Chakra Meru at the Mother's shrine consists of elaborate rituals. This year the havan came off on 14th March.

The proceedings commenced at seven in the morning and purnahuti came off at four in the afternoon. Abhishekkam to Sri Chakra Meru was performed about an hour later.

The havan was witnessed by a large number of devotees as usual.

Visit by Children of Sri Ramana Maharshi Academy for the Blind, Bangalore

Children from Sri Ramana Maharshi Academy for the Blind, Bangalore, visited the Ashram on February 16 and gave an impressive music and dance recital.

It was a moving experience to witness the visually handicapped children perform with ease such difficult items as deepanjali (dancing with lamp in hand) and thillana dance (requiring perfect footwork and synchronisation with time-beat).

Another group of children from the same school came on 16 March and gave a pantomime performance. This was equally impressive.

A book stall was also opened on the occasion.

Swami Mridananda, Swami Ramanananda and Swami Satchidananda at the function in Malayalam brought out in connection with the centenary of Sri Bhagavan's advent at Arunachala.
Celebration of Forty-seventh Aradhana of Sri Bhagavan

At Ashram

(4-5-97)

The forty-seventh anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated at the Ashram in the usual elaborate manner on 4 May, in the presence of a large gathering of devotees. The Ramana Auditorium was specially decorated with flowers, as usual.

The programmes on Aradhana Day are in general identical with those on Jayanthi day except in the choice of Tamil hymns for group singing in the morning.

The after-dinner concert of Smt. Ambika Kameshwar on the 3rd was highly impressive.

At New York

Arunachala Ashrama, New York City, celebrated Aradhana Day on 13 April. The function was largely attended and many had travelled long distances in order to be present.

Flower offerings were made to Sri Bhagavan as is usual on such occasions. The Ashtottara (108 names of Sri Bhagavan) was chanted. There was also group singing of Aksharamanamalai.

Ashram President Sri. V. S. Ramanan (who is now in the U.S.A.) was present and addressed the gathering, recalling his association with Sri Bhagavan.

A Sri Chakra, prepared in India and first sanctified at the Ashram Shrine was installed.

Celebration of Mahapuja at Ashram

(30-5-97)

Sri Matrubhuteswara

Room at Skandasramam where Mahapuja was celebrated this year at the Ashram on 30 May. Special abhishekam and puja to Sri Matrubhuteswara (preceded by mahanyasam) was performed in the presence of a large gathering of devotees. The entire shrine was well decorated with flowers. All the murtis were decorated with special garlands.

The after-dinner concert by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan consisting of songs on and by Sri Bhagavan was very much appreciated by devotees.

Mahapuja was celebrated on Mahapuja Day at Skandasramam where Mother attained Liberation
FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

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<td>Krishna Jayanti (Gokulashtami)</td>
<td>Monday 25.8.97</td>
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<td>101st Anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala</td>
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<td>Pavaya Chathurthi</td>
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<td>Navarathri Festival (commences on)</td>
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<td>Karthigai Festival (commences on)</td>
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<td>Sri Bhagavan's 118th Jayanti</td>
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Obituary

Lalitha Mani (1927-1996)

Lalitha Mani, one of the fortunate few among devotees who had an association with the Ashram right from their childhood — was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on November 11, 1996.

She was given her name by Bhagavan himself at the request of her father, Dr. Narayanan of Srivilliputhur.

As a child she used to play in the Ashram grounds. Sometimes Bhagavan used to join her! On one such occasion Lalitha requested Sri Bhagavan to come to Srivilliputhur. Bhagavan's reply was, "Ask the Mount Anamalai (Arunachala) to come with you to Srivilliputhur. If you take him there, I will follow suit".

Soon after she married Sri. V.S.V. Mani in 1943, Lalitha came to the Ashram and, along with her husband, helped in organising the free dispensary of the Ashram.

She celebrated the wedding of her first son at the Ashram. The golden jubilee of her wedding was also celebrated at the Ashram.

She came on regular trips and kept up the association with the Ashram all through her life.

Robert Adams (1928-1997)

Robert Adams who had been providing valuable spiritual guidance to seekers over the years was a venerable person to large groups of people in the U.S.A. He reached the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on March 2.

Clear biographical details are not available about the best part of his life. This is mainly because Robert Adams was himself reticent on the subject of his past.

We know however that he met outstanding spiritual personalities of his time. They were: Joel Goldsmith, Paramahansa Yogananda, Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi.
He had a spiritual experience of a high order while attending a mathematics class at school when he was fourteen.

About the same time he had another great experience. When he went into the school library and browsed through the yoga section he saw a copy of *Who am I?* of Sri Bhagavan. He was stunned when he saw the picture of Sri Bhagavan in this book. He recognised him to be the same person who had appeared to him when he was a baby in a crib!

Subsequently he met Paramahamsa Yogananda who initiated him. However Yogananda did not permit him to take sannyasa. He directed him to go to India. Robert Adams came to Sri Maharshi in 1946. He stayed at Arunachala for some years. It was clear after coming to Arunachala that Maharshi was his guru.

After the Maha Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan Robert wanted to travel and meet other saints in India. Arthur Osborne is reported to have given some money to Robert in order to help him travel and pursue his spiritual education. It seems he travelled round the world for the next 30 years.

For many years his spiritual activities chiefly consisting of *sat sanghsvatere* conducted at Santa Monica, California.

He passed away at Sedona, Arizona, surrounded by his family and followers.

**Narayana Raju**

Sri Narayana Raju, a staunch devotee and resident of the Ashram, attained the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on the afternoon of May 6. He was over ninety.

For years his daily routine was to decorate with flowers Sri Bhagavan’s picture in the Old Hall. Old devotees will recall this.

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A prosperous mill owner hailing from a village in Bimavaram Taluk of West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, Sri Raju came to Ashram for good more than twenty-five years ago. He was never inclined to go back to his native village.

The end was peaceful and he was conscious till the last.

**Swami Ananthananda**

(1960-1997)

Swami Ananthananda, spiritual head of the Ramana Vidya Peetam Ashram, Tiruchuli attained the feet of the Lord on February 26, 1997.

He was actively involved in guiding seekers by conducting classes on Gita, Upanishad and the teachings of Sri Bhagavan. Apart from this he was also a guide on yoga, natural health and holistic living.

**Yogamaya Bharati Singh**

(1921-1997)

Yogamaya Bharati Singh, wife of Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat, founder of Arunachala Ashrama of America, attained the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on May 8.

Born in Bihar and steeped in the best traditions of orthodox Hinduism she was a source of inspiration to other devotees in the U.S. as well as Canada.

She had a premonition of the end and passed away with the name of the master on her lips.