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

— The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1

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— Editor.

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

Contributions for publication should be addressed to The Editor, The Mountain Path, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. They should be in English and typed with double spacing. Contributions not published will be returned on request.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
A Code of Discipline For Seekers

Man has freedom of action in a general sense. However, his material activities are under the controlling influence of certain regulations. The provisions of statutory law as well as other rules formulated for practical application are binding on all members of society.

Similarly the spiritual life of man is governed by various rules laid down since time immemorial. Such a practical code is essential for progress.

Some instructions given to spiritual aspirants in earlier stages of their development continue to have a relevance even later on. This is because of their fundamental importance. It is true that the seeker who has reached the goal, that is the accomplished one, is not exactly bound by rules. This does not mean that the siddha will transgress all the rules. It only means that when there is any deviation it will be for sound reasons.

In general the observance of scriptural instructions is highly beneficial to all classes of people. The benefit in the first instance is that it chastens the behaviour of the individual. Thereby it also has an impact on society as a whole.

Anyone in any stage of life can and should aspire for Brahma jnana. And, meditation is the direct means of acquiring this knowledge. However, the performance of action, particularly the discharge of obligatory duties, has a purifying effect on the individual. It creates the proper samskaras in him. Any good action, so long as it is devoid of purely selfish or ambitious motives is a useful preliminary for the pursuit of Brahma Vidya in right earnest. Shankara explains this position in his commentary on the
The instruction given by a teacher to a student who has just completed study of the Veda is summarised by the Sruti. (This has been compared by many writers to the system of the convocation address to students in universities). This code should find universal acceptance.

The Sruti says:

Speak the truth. Follow the dharma. Do not be careless about the study of scriptures ... Do not be careless about truth. Do not be careless about dharma. Do not be careless about your prosperity and welfare. Do not be careless about studying and teaching the scripture.

Do not be careless about your duties to the gods and the spirits of your forefathers.

Let your mother be a god to you. Let your father be a god to you. Let your acharya be a god to you. Let your guest be a god to you....

Gifts should be offered with reverence. They should not be offered without reverence. They should be offered generously. They should be offered with modesty. They should be offered with a sense of fear.

Great men set the standards of good behaviour for the guidance of others. They do not derive any personal benefit thereby but act only for the universal good.

In order to explain or interpret His own statement elsewhere that man should perform always the actions that are incumbent on him, Sri Krishna says:

For, whatever a great man does others imitate; whatever standards he sets up the people emulate.

For me, O son of Pritha (Arjuna), there is no action incumbent in the three worlds, nor anything unattained to attain, yet do I act.

If ever I ceased from unwearied action, O son of Pritha, men would in all ways follow my example.

If I ceased from action these worlds would fall in ruin; I should cause social confusion and bring destruction on these people.

One of the important instructions to the student of Brahma Vidya relates to food. The Sruti makes it clear that a reverential attitude should be adopted towards food. Food is the means of sustenance of the body. For the reason that it is the gateway or means for acquisition of Brahma jnana it should not be condemned in any manner. Shankara has pointed out in his commentary on the passage in question that one should not speak ill of food — just in the same way that one would not speak ill of one's guru. The Sruti says:

Food should not be despised. This should be observed as a vow .... (pious resolution).... Food should not be

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1 Manu Samhita.
2 Siksha Valli, Taittiriya Upanishad.
At Sri Ramanasramam Sri Maharshi himself gave the proper, inspiring lead to inmates and devotees in the matter of food. He would see that most of the items which are normally thrown away after every cooking — vegetable peels, orange peels and the like — are utilised properly. He had methods for making special and even tasty dishes out of these items and would give necessary instructions to cooks, personally.

He would not waste even a particle of food himself. He ate in such neat fashion, that, after the meal was over, his (leaf) plate looked as clean and fresh as it was at the start. Food was served to all with a thorough sense of equality. No one present during meal time was denied food.

Spiritual practices and austerities should be kept strictly personal; any kind of publicity or ostentation should be avoided. They would prove counter-productive.

Swami Brahmananda, direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna says:

Spiritual practices should not be done in public or for show. If you do them before others, that will be harmful to you. People will pass comments and make fun of you and offer you unsolicited advice and conflicting suggestions, as a result of which various doubts will arise in your mind and your spiritual progress will be obstructed. The ideal sadhaka behaves thus — he goes to bed at night with the mosquito curtain drawn down. Everybody thinks that he is sleeping, but, as a matter of fact, he spends the whole night in japa and meditation, lying quietly on his bed.

Some seekers may be tempted to take up the role of a guru even before reaching the goal, themselves. This is perhaps the most serious distraction in spiritual life which has an adverse effect both on the 'master' and 'disciple'.

Sri Ramakrishna has cautioned seekers against such a tendency. The following is a dialogue on the question:

Question: What do you think of a man who is a good orator and preacher, but whose spirituality is undeveloped?

Answer: He is like a person who squanders another's property, kept in trust with him. He can easily advise others, for it costs him nothing, since the ideas he expresses are not his own but borrowed.

Question: What is your opinion about the methods employed by present-day religious preachers?

Answer: It is like inviting a hundred people to a dinner where the food is sufficient only for one. It is pretending to be a great religious teacher with

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a very small stock of spiritual experience.\footnote{Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, pp.78-79, Almora Edn (1934).}

The following is another saying of Sri Ramakrishna in the matter:

One day as I was going through Panchavati I heard the fearful croaking of some frog. I guessed that one must have been caught by a snake. When after a long time I was returning that way I heard the same noise again. Peeping through the bushes I saw a water snake with a frog in its mouth. It could neither swallow it, nor let it go, and there was no end to the agony of the frog. Then I thought, "Well, if it had been the victim of a venomous snake, it would have been silenced for ever after three croaks at the most. Now the snake's suffering is about equal to the frog's".

So, if an unenlightened man takes upon himself in his foolhardiness the responsibility of saving another, there is no end to the misery of both. Neither does the ego of the disciple go, nor are his worldly ties cut asunder. If the disciple comes under the influence of an unworthy teacher he can never attain liberation. But under a competent teacher the egoism of the soul perishes in three croaks.\footnote{Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, pp.81-82, Almora Edn (1934).}

The following is not a quotation from a religious text. But it gives the quintessence of religious behaviour, all the same. This piece of writing was found framed and hung over the mantelpiece of a sitting room in a manor house in Gloucestershire, England:

\textit{Portrait of a True Gentleman}

The true gentleman is God's servant, the world's master, and his own man, virtue is his business, study his recreation, contentment his rest and happiness his reward. God is his father, the saints his brethren, and all that need him his friend, devotion is his chaplain, chastity his chamberlain, sobriety his butler, temperance his cook, hospitality his housekeeper, Providence his steward, charity his treasure, piety his mistress of the house and discretion his porter to let in or out, as most fit. Thus is his whole family made up of virtue, and he is the true master of the house ...\footnote{From \textit{Is It Good English?} By John O'London.}

The following verse of Sivaprakasam Pillai records the teaching of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi enjoining restraint in the matter of food and speech:

\textit{Blessed be the Feet of the One whose teaching is "The best in the code (for sadhakas) is moderate eating. (Also) one word spoken leads to a hundred".}\footnote{Sri Ramana Padamalai, Verse 28.}

After a prolonged period of principled living, perhaps lasting for the best part of a life-time, the behaviour of a man becomes highly refined. Ultimately every one of his actions is blemishless and worthy of emulation. His behaviour is spontaneously spiritual. This is the goal of spiritual practice.
There is no limit to the surging rise or to the subsiding tranquillity of the mind. Nor is there any limit to its powers to chastise or control and to confer a blessing. It is indeed the cause of both happiness and misery, of enjoyment and liberation. If we can only understand the original and changing states of the mind, we shall be able to know the real nature of the illusory dream of what is called the waking state which deludes us. If it is recognised that samsara is nothing but the work of the mind, then the mystery of the cycle of births and deaths of the soul will be revealed.

The scriptures say:

Mind alone is the (root) cause of man's bondage and liberation.¹

He who has subdued his mind is awake in that which is night to all beings.²

It is this essential nature of the mind that has been conclusively established by hundreds of such authoritative texts which can be grasped only by experience.

There is no one who does not desire to eradicate misery and attain happiness, nor any who does not strive to this end. Nor are the metaphysicians, who investigate into the active and passive states of the mind, so scarce. But they are rare indeed, who know that the search for the truth about the mind has to be made within oneself and not in others, and that happiness and misery are of one’s own making. Few are those who enquire after the truth about the Self; fewer still are the Self-realized.

“Hardly one among the siddhas who strive, ever understands me aright.” Thus said Lord Krishna; it cannot be otherwise.

The path to Self-realization is not easily accessible, and it is extremely difficult to tread. And except that path there is no other access to the mansion of eternal bliss. Mind-control is the indispensable discipline for those who seek to obtain the knowledge of the Self. It is for this reason that yama is reckoned as the first step in the eightfold yoga. Without attaining perfection in yoga, thaumaturgic powers cannot be achieved. It is quite possible that even the siddhas who had achieved such powers, might not

¹ Amritabindhu Upanishad.
² Bhagavad Gita.

have realized the truth. So then, whom would it not benefit to laud the saint who has realized it?

Such Self-realization dawned all at once for the Maharshi. The light of the Self shone forth suddenly like the flash of lightning. When it was time for karma to fulfil itself, the meritorious past made the ripe fruit of enquiry into the truth, — which was latent in him as vasana — easily fit for enjoyment. The casual hearing of the holy name of Sri Arunachaleswara and the subsequent conscious experience of the state of death were merely the immediate and efficient cause — purely incidental — a slender contrivance to release the flood of inner light. It was the flow of Pure Consciousness of Self into the jiva nadi (life-duct) ensheathed in the inert physical body, like the transmission of the subtle current from the wire into the filament in the electric bulb; it was the separation of the embodied one from the body.

For him, there was no need of any disciplines, nor had he the pain and anguish of the journey to reach the axle centre (of pure Being) from the rim of the wheel of birth and death. The supreme Lord of the universe lifted him up with His sacred hand and established him at the very centre and source of sat-chit-ananda. Then, as he opened his eyes, the world was seen resplendent with light. 'Life in solitude, non-attachment to society, abidance in the Self, direct perception of the Truth' and such other signs of enlightenment became handmaids to the pure soul who in a trice attained eternal liberation.

Though the seed of the meritorious past sprouted in the place of his birth, it grew and bore fruit at the sacred place of Arunachala. What more disciplines are needed than the presence of a perfect seed, the sacred soil of Arunachala, the showering nectar of the Lord’s Grace and the sustaining power of austerity to make the imperishable tree of Spirit firmly rooted and to enrich it with an abundance of divine fruits? Let the tempest rage, the ocean rise up, or the earth quake, the tree of knowledge rooted on the summit of Sri Arunachala stands immutable. Many pilgrims on life’s journey repose in its shade, and countless devotees like birds pour forth their songs from its branches. This is indeed the kingdom of bliss.

The aim is one, and many are the angles of vision; the goal is one, and many are the steps leading thereto. But the eyes that may mark the aim have no sight, and the ways are dark; the paths trodden by great men are not easily known, and they are diverse. It is arduous and difficult to regulate one’s life (conscientiously) after examining and finding out what is happiness and what is misery, what is dharma (duty) and what is adharma (dereliction of duty), what is karma (work) and what is akarma (not work). It is next to impossible for ordinary men to proceed one step without getting entangled in the meshes of illusion. The physical body is heir to disease; fickle is the mind, and narrow the intellect.

"That which in the beginning seems like poison in the end is nectar," is not

3 Bhagavad Gita.
This is a rare photograph of Sri Bhagavan which has not been published so far (Taken: Circa 1910).
said in vain. No need to wonder that the one Real is seen as many and in diverse ways. It is understood by those who have experienced this felicity (of a life of ease) and that agony (of a life of discipline). It is known only to those who have the experience. In this respect, the life of the Maharshi is unique. Lord Arunachala blessed the meritorious soul with His glance so full of mercy, lifted him up into His holy hand, and made him share half His seat in the kingdom of heaven. Only then did Maharshi open his eyes towards the light (outside). He had only to look below with commiseration but never to look above and toil.

It is, perhaps, for this reason that we find in the teachings of Maharshi that the fruit of knowledge is vindicated for the most part rather than the paths towards it signalized — giving pre-eminence to the end rather than to the means. It is also doubtful if he considers the eightfold yoga to be a temporal discipline pertaining merely to the attainment of thaumaturgic powers. Surely, he regards it as a spiritual method intended for the realization of the supreme state. This is indeed the highest end and aim of yoga. Otherwise, it would not be the path of quietude and emancipation but one of activity and attachment. Desire and dispassion are indeed poles apart; and how can liberation come from bondage? They are fit to receive his instruction who, with faith and devotion, earnestly seek truth and ardently aspire for liberation. Save through one's own experience, Self-knowledge is not to be achieved and realized, — never through scholarship. That the expositions of the subtle truth by the Masters who have realized the Self are clearer and more easily grasped than the dialectics of scholars, is due to the fact that the former is the radiance of Pure Consciousness caught on a crystal-clear mind, and the latter is but a dance of ignorance (avidya) aided by intellectual brilliance. In the case of Maharshi, on attaining perfect Self-realization and loss of the ego, scholarship evolved spontaneously as a component part of wisdom. Can there be anything undisclosed, any hidden principle to those who, on the dawn of knowledge, see the entire universe as clearly as the crystal held in the palm and discern the One in many and many in the One? For those who see at a glance the entire essence of everything, can there be puerility of illustrations that appeal direct to the heart? What are scholars and poets before the Self-realized and the seraphic poet?

The sorrows of the distressed who surrender themselves to him, the doubts of the earnest seekers, the disbelief of the sceptics who come to test him, and even the pride of the high and mighty verily perish in the mere presence of Maharshi. His sacred abode confers Peace and even induces that spiritual trance which yields the bliss of Self-realization.

Behold the marvel at the foot of the Banyan tree! Aged are the disciples, and young the Guru! The Guru’s exposition is SILENCE, but the disciples are freed from all doubts!

That divine power of Dakshinamurthy, the embodiment of knowledge working through the inner being of Maharshi is within the ken and experience of such
insignificant devotees as myself. Who then would not long to taste the nectar of the story of such a hallowed one?

Who but one that does not know what is good for the soul, would desist from singing the praise of Hallowed Souls, which is chanted by people past desire, which is the remedy for the 'disease of birth' and which is pleasing to the ear and the mind alike?4

The praise of Maharshi like that of Yogeswara Sri Krishna is relishable and beneficial alike to the sensuous who are sunk in the whirlpool of egoistic attachment, who wallow in the ditch of blind infatuation, and to those who seek liberation and to the liberated. It is indeed our good fortune to live in the life-time of such a distinguished great Sage and to reside in the same country. Blessed are the devotees who spend their time in his Presence.

If in this consecrated offering made for self-purification by the humblest of his devotees, should there be short-comings defects of form or want of taste, may this prayer of mine be accepted:

O Supreme Lord of the Universe! Bear with the errors of Thy Children, Who cannot even scrawl the letters of Thy name, H-A-R-I, On the customary layers of rice.

The life of Maharshi who has attained liberation, is not the biography of an individual but the radiance of the universal Self, not the expression of body's acts but the manifestation of the Spirit within.

4 Bhagavatam.

THE INWARD LIGHT

By Robert Goslin

Why do you learn to be in constant quest
When what you seek but lies without your door
Or fills the soul and always lies within?

So simple is the answer to your dreams —

So obvious — that it is unobserved.

Suffice to know that you have treasure now;
For rich perfection was on you bestowed

When you were fashioned first among the stars, Brushed with the essence of immortal dust.

For thus formed long ago in mystic light, The magic that was you was slowly breathed Into a lowly cell for human birth; And though your mind has limits of its own, Which veil the concepts of your early source, Before the dawn may come — though not at will — In the Non-Space and Non-Time; lucid — still — A glimpse of what was once ... will always be ...
Sri Ramana Maharshi’s Influence on Keithahnji

By Deborah Keithahn

The writer who lives in Rome is the granddaughter of Reverend Dr. Ralph Richard Keithahn. He was a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. Deborah Keithahn came on a special visit to India some time back with the object of doing research on her grandfather’s life and building up some documentation. As a result of her contact with Kitty Osborne, daughter of Arthur Osborne, the founder editor of The Mountain Path, she learnt much about Maharshi as well as his influence on Keithahnji.

We are happy to publish her write-up.

Rev. Dr. R.R. Keithahn, sent to India in 1925 by the American missions, identified himself with the freedom struggle which brought him into close association with Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders of the time. Within a short time he joined the Sarvodaya Movement, led by the man he considered to be the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. The Movement’s goal was more than just gaining independence from the British rule; it proposed a constructive programme that would enable India to have her own structure — political and economic. Most important of all, it would be independent of any other model. For the next sixty years Keithahn dedicated himself completely to the Sarvodaya ideal, Gandhian constructive training, Vinoba Bhave’s Bhoodan Movement, and inter-religious fellowship. This earned him the respect of his associates and also led to his being christened Keithahnji, the leader of the Sarvodaya Movement in Tamil Nadu.

This was the era of humanitarian issues and compassionate ideals universally expressed by contemplating souls — Emerson and Thoreau in New England, Count Tolstoi’s War and Peace as well as Ruskin’s Unto the Last not only influenced Gandhi, but challenged innumerable pioneers to come forth and construct a new order on the frontiers, while the old structure still existed. A brotherhood of every culture and religion brought together an admirable movement of inter-religious faith and service.
unto the 'last' of society. Enthusiasm was in the air, freedom and upliftment to all, barriers based on caste and creed were broken down.

In Keithahn’s unpublished writing Reflections, he recalls how this rich culture that he so dearly loved, guided him to Tiruvannamalai:

There is hardly a day that I don’t express my gratitude for the privilege of being in India. How I have been challenged, in many ways to live abundantly and creatively! First of all I am constantly challenged to be a better disciple of Christ. It was Gandhiji and his remarkable co-workers that stood at the centre of this challenge in India. I would not belittle the influence of Gandhiji himself; perhaps I shall never be able to testify to that adequately. ... Another particular Indian influence was that of the saints of South India during my day. There was Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai. Perhaps he was the Guru with the greatest integrity in those days. My first coming into his presence was a unique experience... with Ramana there was something unique. As soon as I came into the meditation hall, where around forty devotees were gathered that afternoon, I felt a fellowship of the spirit that I had not experienced with another until then. There was a remarkable communion which seemed to lead to a full understanding. Later at the informal evening meal there seemed to be no need of discussing any of the great aspects of life. And when on the homeward drive someone asked me why I had not asked any questions that afternoon, I replied that there had been no need; I was convinced that I could give Swamiji’s reply to any of the questions that they might have in mind. It is experiences like this that have made me convinced that India could deepen, broaden and heighten our experiences of the living Christ.

There are several documents and letters in which Keithahn continuously refers to Ramana Maharshi with great respect and devotion. In his booklet, Christ Centred Frontiers, it is interesting to note that even while talking to his Christian comrades or conducting prayer meetings or even speaking to his fellow workers, his thoughts turn to Bhagavan.

India was struggling for her freedom. In a chaotic, disharmonious period of experimentation, undoubtedly the forces of sathyagraha and passive resistance questioned their age-old methods of ahimsa and satya as the means to combat the ruling authority. Many of these freedom fighters set out in search of answers from India’s revered saints.

Shri Markandan, Vice Chancellor of Gandhigram University, recounts a memorable sathyagraha led by Keithahn for the release of temple land in Madurai. Shri Makandan along with Keithahn and 600 sathyagrahis were imprisoned.

He says:

Keithahnji used to speak after the prayer meetings, he used to mention invariably Ramana and would say, ‘I went to Ramana Maharshi’s ashram and together we sat in silence and in silence we interacted. I have great
admiration for Ramana, so just like I have great respect for other Hindu saints. All over the world the saints speak in one language; in one voice they speak...so there is no difference between one religion and the other; mankind today can show the same goal, so we must learn from one another.' Keithahn is still ingrained in my memory, as we followed his convictions to find ourselves also in Tiruvannamalai.

One of Keithahn's closest associates, Shri Jagannathan, President, Grama Swaraj Movement Tamil Nadu, today at the age of 86, continues to carry on the work. Still living among India's rural poor, this revolutionary sathyagrahi brought the people's case up to India's Supreme Court. Last December 1997, after 5 years of non-violent combats, he stopped the multi-nationals' business of intense prawn farming, which has been the cause of environmental damage to India's long coast.

He too sought out Shri Ramana. In a recent interview he describes the encounters as follows:

What did Ramana Maharishi say?

He didn't say anything, he just simply started smiling, that is the answer; the silent answer. You converse in the spirit...

How did you feel?

At that time I was a little dissatisfied, I was asking questions and he was simply smiling, but now I understand the significance of it.

What made you go to him?

I think I had met him three times two years before (sic), even afterwards I went there, just on my way even during one of my padyatras, I would stop at the ashram. He was so popular and he comes from my district, Ramnad. I went and saw the house where he was born in.

All of the freedom fighters went to visit Ramana Maharshi — Jamnalaal Bajaj, Rajendra Prasad...

Yes, Yes, I know. We all went.

What did Keithahnji say about Ramana Maharshi?

He says, "I conversed with him in silence, I had conversation with him in silence, I was sitting before him, saying nothing with words, but our hearts corresponded, We were conversing in silence."

Was he satisfied?

Oh yes, he was so happy...

When asked by the writer about his visits to Arunachala, Jagannathan said that he used to go up on the Hill where there was a water spring to take a bath. His face changed its expression as he described the vision he had in the water fall; 'I saw Ramana Maharshi's face, a sort of mirage was happening.' (Jagannathan’s voice faded away as he fell back to that time in his mind.)

The following is Keithahnjji's message based on his life-long mission in India. It is a sort of blend of the Christian gospels and the ideals of the Sarvodaya movement:

To strengthen the spiritual life we must use the "divine formula" — WORSHIP, WORK, WAIT. Only as we
worship God can we work for Him to
the fullest advantage, guided and con­
strained by his inclusive concern.
Only as we work genuinely for the
common good can we feel the need
for the worship where the whole self
cries for God to help us with our puny
efforts to make His reality known and
to make a better world. Only as we
wait can we learn that growth does not
depend upon him who gives the in­
crease, we know not how. Pray we
must, study we must, give we must;
but above all we must find our lives
bathed in the reality of God’s faithful­
ness.

The following passage from Keithahn’s
booklet *A farm boy goes to Carlton* is very
significant:

I have been a humble pioneer on
spiritual frontiers. I often conversed
with Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvanna-
malai in silence. Ask me whether he
believed this or that and I shall tell
you!... the place has changed since his
death, although I am certain that we
are still carrying on our dialogue.

---

**THE ACTOR**

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

— *Day By Day with Bhagavan*, p.264.
From The Sayings Of Ramdas

JNANA

RIGHT knowledge, destroying ignorance, dissolves the ego sense. True knowledge consists in your consciousness of oneness with the immortal Atman, seated in your heart, and pervading all life and form in the universe.

Forget not that you are the immortal and blissful Spirit.

Identification with the Atman and surrender of all actions to Shakti grants the light of knowledge and dispels the darkness of ignorance.

Do not seek the bliss of the Atman outside.

External darshan however frequently you may have it, cannot quench your thirst. You ought to drink the nectar of immortality through close communion, and a feeling of oneness, with the eternal Atman who dwells in you.

You cannot eternally be demeaning yourself in the presence of saints. Receive the touch, and be the saint yourself.

Realise, realise, realise; and give up all preconceived notions, and thoughts, borrowed from the expressions and sayings of saints, who have given vent to them in their various moods of Self-realisation. See for yourself; understand for yourself; and assert and make manifest, your own divine nature.

Assert your divine nature. Be conscious of the presence of God within you. Don't allow the passing phases of life to throw a mantle over the revealed light of Truth within you.

Never lose your equilibrium under the stress of any external circumstances. They come and go, like the clouds in the breeze; stand firm on the rock of your unchanging and immortal existence.

Contemplation of the Truth leads us to the realisation of it, i.e. we come to understand and experience the sublimity of it.

Know that you are not this restless mind, but that you are the immortal, all-blissful, and changeless Spirit.

Question yourself as to who you are, and an immediate response will come...
from within, to the effect that you are the eternal, perfect Truth and Life.

You, as an individual actor, apart from the universal Truth and Spirit, are utterly imaginary. You — and all the rest — do actions by the supreme will and power of the Lord.

Consider not that you are merely a perishable and changing being; you are the absolute, immortal, changeless, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient Truth.

We are forever one with Him, though we pretend to be playing our parts as if we were different from Him.

Let us not forget that all forms are subject to dissolution. And let us remember that the eternal Atman, of which they
are only the fitting expressions, is deathless and changeless.

Sorrowing over the passing away of the body is pure folly; only what is perishable has resolved itself into its elements but the Truth is immortal, and we are, in our true essence, everlastingly one with it.

Guru kripa is always on you. Become aware of it, and you are free. Awareness comes through ceaseless remembrance of what you are in reality, namely, that you are the immortal Spirit filled with absolute peace and bliss.

Really, to stand apart from the mind and watch its activities, is a blissful exercise. The moment the disassociation becomes complete, that is to say, one’s identification with the watcher or the witness becomes perfect, that very moment the mind dissolves, and you attain samadhi i.e. absolute peace and bliss.

The guru’s heart is ever soft and, by constant meditation, the chela grows into the likeness of his Master and possesses the same purity and softness of heart as those of the guru. Forget not that the guru is within you — know that you are not different from Him.

Yoga denotes equilibrium — a condition of unalterable and unshakeable peace and joy.

Throw up the mask that enshrouds your real divine nature and reveal yourself in all your magnificence.

However you may play at being ignorant or wise, bound or free, happy or unhappy, you are ever and ever He.

Moksha is not dependent on any particular external situation or circumstance. Moksha is the realisation of immortality by the removal of ignorance through the attainment of divine knowledge. It is primarily a change in our internal consciousness and vision. A man, who is placed in a certain situation in the days of his ignorance, may still continue to remain there, in the same situation, even after he has attained divine knowledge.

God is the one sole Reality; our physical body is only a transient and perishable manifestation of that great, undying, eternal Truth. Truly we are the immortal Atman, the changeless and deathless Spirit.

He dons bodies and He doffs them. He remains the same, and the same, for ever and for ever. Difference and diversity are only apparent. Names and forms are impermanent.

Realise that He, the infinite power within you, guides you, controls you and actuates you to do all things, at all times. Rise above conditioned conception of things that is to say, rise above the gunas and dwandwas.

“Seek within — know Thyself” these secret and sublime hints come to us wafted on the breath of rishis through the dust of ages.

Let us know that all actions, irrespective of any denomination, are pure and divine; because the divine alone is at work in the entire universe. Our bodies are merely vehicles through which Shakti works to fulfil Her purpose. It is She who
works in the saint as well as in the sinner. Saint and sinner are merely names. Ignorance makes us see the difference between the two.

No external darshan can give us eternal happiness; it can yield only transitory satisfaction and peace. We must seek fellowship of the imperishable Truth within us, so as to merge ourselves ultimately in Him and realise immortal bliss.

Believe that the Lord of the worlds, who is absolute peace, power and bliss, is always dwelling within you.

Let bodies come, let bodies go; we are eternally dwelling in Him and are eternally one with Him.

Why should you feel dissatisfied when you know that the satchidananda swarupa of God is within you? He is the goal, He is the path; and you are eternally He.

Life can be understood only by going to the very root of it. And the root is ever sweet and eternal.

At the inception of all phenomenal life and existence there are the ever-abiding calmness, peace and repose of the immortal and all-pervading Truth.

You are the Truth itself, you are the Ideal itself. Infinity and eternity are the qualities of your true existence, where duality and differentiation have no significance.

The conflict of apparently opposing forces in the play of the natural phenomena is viewed by a man of clear vision exactly as a drama on the stage is viewed by one in an audience witnessing it.

Dependence on the joy of a saint’s darshan is not the whole thing; because such joy, we know, is only relative. We want a joy which is self-dependent, eternal and subject to no conditions.

SELF-SURRENDER

Self-surrender means offering of all your actions to the divine Shakti, i.e. to become conscious by gradual practice that you, as a separate individual doer, do not exist.

To maintain the equilibrium of mind, the sovereign remedy is to submit calmly to the will and workings of God who guides and controls the destinies of the universe.

Take anything that comes as being for your best.

Have implicit trust in His mercy and goodness.

Be brave and cheerful always and let no passing storms of life overpower you.

Surrender yourself to the divine Mother who is the Shakti that works in you, and She will see that you live a true and peaceful life, ever guided and led by Her omniscient will.

Make your entire life and all its activities a blissful expression of Truth.

To realise His presence within us and be the willing and playful instrument in His hands, is to be perfectly free and blissful.

It is He within you who animates your existence and actuates all your works. Know that you are eternally one with Him; and still be His servant and child.
Have unshakeable faith in the Almighty Lord of the universe.

What a glorious privilege it is to know, by the grace of the Lord, that He is the sole doer and that He is all in all.

God places us in our respective situations which, however miserable or happy they may be from the external point of view, are always for our good.

Life becomes blessed and glorious when all its varied activities are dedicated in their entirety to the Lord and Master of the worlds, who is eternally seated in our hearts.

Believe always that you are an instrument in the divine hands. If you do so, there will be no reason to think that you have any drawbacks.

Do not eschew the usual work that falls to your lot in the worldly life. Do all such work in the light of sadhana itself, as the pure service of the Lord.

To reach the Divine Mother in Her all inclusive swarupa you ought to transcend the symbol that represents Her, and attain the nirguna aspect of God by complete surrender of all your actions to Her.

Submission to God’s will in all things is the keynote of the universal vision. Man in this state realises that he is a mere instrument worked by the divine will and power, ever resigned and cheerful, accepting all change of time and place as determined by Him for the fulfilment of His plan and purpose.

The antagonistic influences are not without us; they raise their hood from within. Resignation to God destroys them.

Truly, surrender to the divine Mother’s will is the sure way to receive right guidance and lead in all things. Depend upon Her in all matters. Feel Her presence in yourself always and be free and blissful at all times.

To be dispirited by the sufferings of others, be they one’s relatives or not, is clearly due to the obsession of oneself by moha. For one who is a mere plaything in the hands of every passing passion and emotion, all in regard to the perishable and the transient, surrender to God is certainly a self-deception and an illusion. Because, self-surrender denotes a state beyond the passions and affections of the ignorant human nature.

To understand the working of God’s will you have to submit to it unreservedly. Then you come to know that everything happens by His will, and for good.

Impatience in any matter is a sign of weakness. So, to be free from it, submission to God’s will in all things is the way.

It is He who gives us every situation and every change. He knows what is good for us. His main object is to draw us towards Himself. He brings about all incidents in our life to fulfil this purpose of His.

To realise prakriti as the doer is to identify oneself with purusha, that is, to realise immortality. This is what is meant by surrender to the will of God. The will here is prakriti as the doer; God, as purusha, is the non-doer. Purusha and prakriti are one.
FROM THE SAYINGS OF RAMDAS

We want Him and Him alone, because He is the only reality. Our work, thought and love must therefore always be for Him.

External forms and slavish adoption of the distorted rules of sastras cannot save you. You have to surrender yourself entirely to the supreme Lord dwelling in your heart and in the hearts of all, and dedicate all your actions to Him.

Contentment comes only to those who have submitted to the will of the supreme Lord of the universe.

Grumbling denotes want of faith in God. Rejoice in the good fortune of others and find contentment in the situation in which God has at present placed you.

The defect solely lies in our attitude towards the outside life. The path is self-surrender. You can be without the ego sense and still live engaged in the activities of the world in a state of perfect freedom and peace.

God-realisation is not renunciation of the world but to look upon the world as a manifestation of the Lord and to serve Him in all creatures and beings, in a condition of perfect submission to His will.

If we look at life with a purified vision, we behold in all happenings and events the finger of God working for the good of all. In the so-called tribulations and trials of life there is a spring of pure wisdom flowing.

When a man offers himself entirely to God in all the activities of his life he attains true freedom and pure joy. Life then becomes a beautiful flower ever spreading its fragrance all round.

Don’t forget, that, as an aid to meditation, dedication of all your activities to the divine Shakti is essential.

There is no disorder in the universe, because all things happen by the will of God, who is harmony and peace themselves. He always determines things and events for good and good alone.

The Lord assures us that no storm of life, however terrifying, can overwhelm us if we take complete refuge in Him.

Blessed is he who throws the whole burden of his life on the divine Mother and Master of our existence and of that of the world.

Self-surrender is not a state to be attained. We live always in that state. We are simply to become conscious of it. Situations need not change, there need be no alterations in activity.

Things may appear to be out of joint. But that is due to our distorted vision. Purify the vision by self-surrender, and you see everything for good. There is nothing to find fault with, here. God’s work is always for unity, harmony and joy.

Every activity, great or small, performed by us consciously or unconsciously, within us or without us, is all the work of Shakti. Our mind calls a particular activity virtuous and docket some other as sinful. This estimation of the mind is entirely false, based upon ignorance. No action is sinful, no action is virtuous. All action is simply the work of Prakriti or Shakti.
DREAMS

By Sadhu Arunachala (Major A.W. Chadwick)

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

SHAKESPEARE really did know what he was talking about, it was not just poetic effervescence. Maharshi used to say exactly the same. I suppose I questioned Bhagavan more often on this subject than any others; some doubts always remained for me. He had always warned that as soon as one doubt was cleared, another would spring up in its place — there was no end to such.

“But, Bhagavan”, I would repeat, “dreams are disconnected, while the waking experience goes on from where it left off and is admitted by all to be more or less continuous.”

“Do you say that in your dreams?”, Bhagavan would ask. “They seemed perfectly consistent and real to you then. It is only now, in your waking state, that you question the reality of the experience. This is not logical.”

Bhagavan refused to see the least difference between the two states, and in this he agreed with all the great Advaitic Seers. Some have questioned if Shankara did not draw a line of difference between these two states, but Bhagavan has persistently denied it. Shankara did it apparently only for the purpose of clearer exposition, he would explain.

The answer I received from Sri Bhagavan was always the same, however I tried to twist my questions. He would say:

Raise your doubts when in the dream state itself. You do not question the waking state when you are awake, you accept it, in the same way you accept your dreams. Go beyond both states, all three states including deep sleep, and study them from that point of view. You now study one limitation from the point of view of another limitation. Could anything be more absurd? Go beyond all limitation, then come here with your doubts.

But in spite of this, doubts still remained. I somehow felt at the time of dreaming there was something unreal in it, not always of course. But just glimpses now and then.

“Doesn’t that ever happen to you in your waking state too?” Bhagavan queried. “Don’t you sometimes feel that the world you live in and everything happening in it is unreal?”

Reproduced from *The Call Divine*, March 1954.

1 *The Tempest.*
Still in spite of all this, doubt persisted.

But one morning I went to Bhagavan and much to his amusement handed him a paper on which the following was written:

Bhagavan remembers that I expressed some doubts about the resemblance between dreams and waking experience. Early in the morning most of these doubts were cleared by the following dream, which seemed particularly objective and real:

I was arguing philosophy with someone. I pointed out that all experience was only subjective, that there was nothing outside the mind.

The other person demurred, pointing out how solid everything was and how real experience seemed. It could not be just personal imagination.

I replied, “No, it is nothing but a dream, dream and waking experience are exactly the same.”

“You say that now”, he replied, “But you would never say such a thing in your dream.”

And then I woke up.
Nataraja: The Lord of Dance

By M. Ravindra Narayanan

Man, ever since the beginning of time, has worshipped the five basic elements or panchabhutas — earth, water, air, fire and ether. The Vedas have accorded high status to them and sung their praise. Ancient seers have explained the divinity embodied in the elements of Nature and their metaphysical significance.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has explained how Prakriti or nature is but a manifestation of the Supreme Being and hence deserves to be worshipped. Maharshi says:

If we but recognise this Universe
Of eightfold form as form of God,
Himself,
And serve in adoration all the world,
This is of God most excellent
worship.1

Lord Siva specially manifests Himself as one of these panchabhutas and is worshipped as such in five different centres in South India. Thus Kancheepuram houses the Prithvi Linga (Earth); Tiruvanaikaval near Tiruchirapalli is the Appu Linga (Water); Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh represents the Vayu Linga (Air); Tiruvannamalai (Arunachala) is where Lord Siva manifests as Tejo Linga (Fire) and is worshipped in the form of a Mountain; and, Chidambaram represents Akasa Linga (ether or space).

The Story of Chidambara Kshetra

A Puranic story explains how Siva chose to manifest Himself as Nataraja, the Lord of dance at Chidambaram.

The Rishis of yore residing in the Daruka forest were great advocates of the karma marga. They were given to performing elaborate yagnas as prescribed in the Vedas and believed that such karmas would by themselves lead to the highest Liberation. Lord Siva, in order to free them of their delusion descended upon Darukavana (where the Rishis were performing a huge yagna) along with Sri Maha Vishnu disguised as Mohini. The Rishis were captivated by the beauty of Mohini and went after her. The wives of the Rishis on beholding the Bhikshatana form of Lord Siva were fascinated and followed Him. The Rishis were enraged and they realised that the sanctity of their yagna was being vitiated. Vowing to punish the one responsible for this they began fighting with the Lord. They used all kinds of weapons and finding that none worked against Him they started producing objects from their sacrificial fire. The Lord seized each of those weapons and made them his ornaments. The

1 The five elements along with the Sun, Moon and the individual selves constitute the entire universe.
bewildered Rishis surrendered to the Lord and realised His true identity.

Lord Siva then danced the Tandava for them and expounded the doctrine of Brahman, the Supreme Self. After returning to Vaikunta, Sri Maha Vishnu narrated to Adisesha, the Lord of the Serpents, the story of Siva’s dance. On hearing the exploits of the Lord, Adisesha developed an intense desire to watch His dance and to this end performed rigorous tapas. Lord Siva appeared and promised Adisesha that he would dance at the Tillai forest situated in the southern part of Bharatavarsha on the afternoon of Thai Poosam day which would fall on a Thursday. Adisesha then decided to proceed straight to Tillai. He exhibited extreme reverence and devotion by descending on earth with his palms joined in obeisance. He was therefore known as Patanjali, the one who came with his palms joined in namaskara. Patanjali appeared at Tillai, the upper part of his body resembling a human one and the lower part resembling that of a serpent. Vyaghrapada, another devotee of the Lord, who performed intense tapas with the intention of witnessing His dance, was also directed to Tillai and await the arrival of Patanjali. Vyaghrapada, in order that he may be able to climb trees swiftly and pluck bilva leaves and flowers for Siva puja, prayed to the Lord that he may be blessed with the feet of a tiger. The Lord granted his request and thus it was that he acquired the name Vyaghrapada.

It was the exemplary devotion shown by Patanjali and Vyaghrapada that persuaded Lord Siva to manifest as Nataraja in the Tillai forest and to perform the Ananda Tandava to the delight and benefit of the entire universe. On the appointed day as promised to Patanjali and Vyaghrapada, the Lord danced at Tillai amidst Brahma, Vishnu, Saraswati, Narada and Nandikeswara who played musical instruments, and the celestials who watched awe-struck. In response to the prayers of all those assembled the Lord agreed to make the Tillai forest his permanent abode and perform the Tandava dance, the true significance of which is the vision of the Supreme Self dancing in the heart-lotus of the devotee.

Lord Nataraja and Kali

Another local legend tells the story of Kali competing with Lord Siva in dance. Kali was proud that she was all-powerful and began destructive activities. Lord Vishnu and Narada, the celestial sage, appealed to Siva to save the world from destruction. The Lord then appeared at Tillai and waged war against Kali. Siva destroyed Kali's army in no time. She then suggested that they compete in dance and decide who was the victor. Both began dancing. One of the Lord's ear-rings fell to the ground and He picked it up with his right foot and fixed it back in its place. On account of feminine modesty (which would be breached if she assumed such a posture) this extraordinary feat was impossible for Kali to perform and She had to accept defeat. Kali was then asked by the Lord to proceed to the Northern boundary of the Tillai forest. There she resides in a
temple built for Her and is known as Tillai Kaliyammman. Lord Siva was then requested by the celestials to make the Tillai forest his permanent abode.

The Significance of Akasa Tattwa

Nataraja's dance in the evening is known as Pradosha Natya or Sandhya Tandava. The stillness coupled with the darkness of dusk creates a special atmosphere and has esoteric significance. The light of the Supreme Self brightens the evening; ignorance and illusion are removed. The Chitsabha where Nataraja dances is the physical representation of the Heart or Chidakasa. The individual soul because of vasanas or latent tendencies accumulated over innumerable births, is deluded into ignorance and loses its true moorings. When the Self takes over and reveals its power, illusion of the soul is destroyed and true knowledge shines in the heart. Siva's dance has to be contemplated in this metaphysical light in order to understand the import of Akasa Tattwa and the significance of Chidambara Rahasya. The Lord's dance encompasses the five acts, the panchakrityas: creation, protection, destruction, causing ignorance and granting of salvation. The Lord creates the world out of His own Shakti and at the end of creation, He withdraws Shakti unto Himself. The entire universe is dissolved and He alone shines in all His Glory. The screen in the Chitsabha when pulled aside reveals empty space. Behind the veil shines the Supreme Truth. This is the significance of Akasa Tattwa and Nataraja's dance. Shakti or Sivakamasundari, the consort of Nataraja is depicted as silently witnessing Nataraja's dance and finally merging with Him. Lord Maha Vishnu who, as Govindaraja, resides in the same temple complex, is seen to be reclining, which is neither sleep nor the state of waking. This signifies the state of turiya which manifests on the removal of maya. Thus Siva and Vishnu exemplify the Supreme Truth of Chidambaram under the same roof.

The Principle of Chid-akasa: Sri Bhagavan's Exposition

Chit means Consciousness or Pure Knowledge. Ambaram means dress or garment. And it also means space or ether. Hence Chidambraram and Chidakasa are synonymous.

The principle of Chidakasa is explained as follows by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Chidakasa (Chit-ether) is Pure knowledge only. It is the source of the mind. Just at the moment of rising up, the mind is only light; only afterwards the thought 'I am this' rises up; this 'T'-thought forms the jiva and the world.

The first light is the pure mind, the mind-ether or Iswara. Its modes manifest as objects. Because it contains all these objects within itself it is called mind-ether. Why ether? Like ether containing objects it contains the thoughts, therefore it is the mind-ether.

Again, just as the physical ether though accommodating all the gross objects (the whole universe) is itself the content of the mind-ether, so also the latter itself is the content of Chit-
ether. The last one is *Chit* itself. There are no things contained in it. It remains as Pure Knowledge only.\(^2\)

**Significance of the Nataraja Idol**

The *panchaloka* idol of Lord Nataraja is a beautifully sculpted piece. It reveals the power of the Lord as beautifully as it projects His joyous *Ananda Tandava*. It fully reflects the peace and sublimity of the Supreme Self that He is.

The long hair of Nataraja is braided, the upper portions being tied in the form of a crown. The hair is shown to be whirling and reaching out to space while the Lord dances. This shows that the Lord reaches out to mankind to confer *jnana* or the Supreme Knowledge. He also carries on his matted locks the river *Ganga* which symbolises purity and the moon which symbolises beauty and growth. Peacock feathers and flowers adorn his hair apart from His inevitable companions, the serpents, which signify the element of air and a human skull, which, with its expression of laughter offers a telling commentary on the transitory nature of life. Siva wears *yagnopavita*, the sacred thread and has *vibhuti*, sacred ashes smeared all over His body. This conveys the message that when all *karma* is burnt away, what is left is absolute purity. The Lord is depicted with three eyes, which are said to represent the Sun, Moon and Fire. The third eye between the eye-brows is the eye of wisdom. He wears the *kundala* (male ear-ring) on his right ear and the *tattanka* (female earring) on his left to signify the merging of *Shakti* with Him. That the great cosmic force which is the cause of all activity has to finally merge in the Self is the true import of this.

The Nataraja idol has four hands. The right upper hand holds the *damaruka* (drum) which symbolises creation or evolution, the first of the Lord’s five actions (*panchakrityas*). Siva shows the *abhaya mudra* with his right lower hand. This is the symbol of protection, the second of the *panchakrityas*. The Lord asks his devotees not to fear and assures protection. The left upper hand of the Lord holds fire which symbolises destruction, the third of the *panchakrityas*; the true significance being that the vasanas or latent tendencies in man are destroyed by the mercy of the Lord. The right foot rests on the demon Apasmara or Muyalaka. The right foot symbolises *tirodona* (delusion) which is also caused by the Lord. Apasmara symbolises ignorance and the delusion from which the human soul suffers. The left lower hand hangs down and points to the raised left foot. This is an exhortation to man to surrender the ego at His feet and solely depend on His grace. Nataraja’s *Ananda Tandava* as depicted in the *vigraha* (icon) is the highest point of art. It is also the representation of perfection and beauty. The symmetry of the arms, legs and body, dancing with perfect rhythm, coupled with the expression of joy, confidence, valour and infinite compassion on the face, present a picture of the Great Artist, the Dancer Supreme. He goes about performing His roles (the *panchakrityas*) with a perfection and finesse that only true seers can behold.

\(^2\) *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.541.
Reference to Lord Nataraja by Sri Bhagavan

A close devotee of Sri Bhagavan during the Virupaksha Cave days was keen to have him visit Chidambaram for darshan of Lord Nataraja. He would speak of Chidambaram as the greatest of all kshetras since it represented akasa (space) into which all the other elements had to finally merge; therefore Chidambaram was greater than Tiruvannamalai. With great reverence, the devotee requested Sri Bhagavan to visit Chidambaram. Sri Bhagavan thereupon smiled and said:

All the five elements come into existence only when Shakti seemingly forsakes Her identity with Lord Siva, the Supreme Self. Since the five elements are only the creations of Shakti, She is superior to all of them. Therefore, more important than the place where the elements merge, is the place where Shakti Herself merges. Because Shakti is dancing in Chidambaram, Lord Siva has to dance before Her and thereby make Her motionless. But in Arunachala Lord Siva remains ever motionless. Hence Shakti effortlessly merges in Him through great love.\(^3\)

The devotee being a good scholar himself, could appreciate the truth of Sri Bhagavan’s exposition and never again broached the subject. Subsequently, after many years, Sri Bhagavan summarised this reply in the form of a verse which became the first verse of His Arunachala Navamanimalai (Necklet of Nine Gems). In this verse He says:

Although (Shiva) is motionless He dances before the Mother (Shakti) who stands still in the court (of Chidambaram). But know that that Shakti is withdrawn into His unmoving Self and He stands in His grandeur as the towering Arunachala.\(^4\)

Another incident took place during Sri Bhagavan’s Virupaksha Cave days and is connected with Sri Ramanatha Brahmachari, a veteran devotee who considered Sri Bhagavan to be Lord Nataraja Himself. Once, Sri Bhagavan and some of His devotees started on Giri Pradakshina. Bhagavan himself has recalled the incident:

On another occasion, when we were at Virupaksha Cave, we had set out to go round the Hill and Chidambaram Subrahmanya Sastri was the leader of the party. When we came somewhere near here, he proposed that each one should lecture for an hour going round the Hill, on Guru Bhakti and Ramanathan’s was the first turn. Ramanathan began his lecture and elaborated his theme that Tiruvannamalai and Ramana, Chidambaram and Nataraja, and the body and the Self are the same and went on elaborating the theme, addressing ingenious arguments in support of the same with such fervour and spirit that he far exceeded his time limit. When he was asked to stop, he pleaded piteously for a little more


\(^4\) Verse 1, *Necklet of Nine Gems, Five Hymns to Arunachala*. 

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NATARAJA: THE LORD OF DANCE
time. So he was allowed to continue. Even after he had taken two hours he would not finish and he had to be stopped and another was asked to speak. It was wonderful the way Ramanathan spoke. None would have expected it of him. It was the next day he composed the song Tiruchuzinathanai Kandene.\(^5\)

The above song encapsulates the theme of Sri Ramanatha Brahmachari’s speech.

Sri Bhagavan has also explained the true significance of the Puranic statement that to be born in Tiruvarur, to have darshan at Chidambaram, to die in Benares or merely to think of Arunachala assures Liberation. He says:

Jananat Kamalalaye means “by being born in Kamalalaya (Tiruvarur)”. What is it? It is the Heart. Similarly, Darsanat Abhrasadasi (Chidambaram) is the Seat of Consciousness. Again, Kasi (Benares) is the Light of Realisation. Remembering Arunachala completes the verse.\(^6\)

Other names of Chidambaram

Chidambaram is also known as Vyaghrapura in Sanskrit or Puliyur in Tamil because of Vyaghrapada’s association. Lord Nataraja is called Sabhanayaka (the Lord of the Sabha or Hall). For Saivites it is simply Koil which in Tamil, means temple.

The Structure of the Temple

The temple was built by Hiranyavarma, a Chola king. It has four Rajagopuras (main towers). The Chitsabha is the innermost sanctum which is graced by the powerful panchaloha idol of Sri Nataraja in the dancing posture and the Kanakasabha is a mantapa situated just in front of the Chitsabha. The Vimana right above the Chitsabha is gold-coated and has nine gold kalasas. Five steps which are silver-coated lead into the innermost sanctum of Lord Nataraja. This symbolises the Panchakshara or the five-letter mantra sacred to Lord Siva. In the second prakara is situated the Nritya Sabha or the Dance hall. This Nritya Sabha has been artistically built to resemble a chariot with stone wheels and horses. This hall contains many sculptures of dance figures exquisitely carved. The Sivalinga worshipped by Patanjali and Vyaghrapada is enshrined to the north of the Chitsabha in the second prakara. The Sivaganga tank, the shrine for Goddess Sivakamasundari, the hundred-pillared and the thousand-pillared halls and shrines for Lord Vinayaka and Lord Subramanya are situated in the third prakara. Appropriately, dance postures from the Natya Sastra, a treatise on dance and dramatics written by Bharata, are carved in the passageways of each gopura of the Chidambaram temple. Lord Nataraja and his consort Sivakamasundari are enshrined in the Chitsabha. The Chidambaram Rahasya or mystery is enshrined to the right of Nataraja. Strings of golden bilva leaves hang here. These are hidden by a curtain. After the deeparadhana ceremony (the waving of lamps) following the pujas six times a

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\(^5\) Page 113. Day by Day with Bhagavan.

\(^6\) Talk 473. Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi.
day to the Lord, the curtain is pulled aside amid chanting of the *Siva Panchakshara*. The empty space behind the curtain signifies removal of ignorance and the revelation of the highest truth of the Upanishads — the glory of the Supreme Self. This is the ultimate philosophy of the *akasa tattwa* as symbolised by the *Ananda Tandava* of Lord Nataraja.

The *Chitsabha* also contains a *Spatika Linga* (crystal linga) which is supposed to have been given to Sri Adi Shankara by Lord Siva himself along with the *Ratnasabhapati* idol (Nataraja’s idol made of ruby). These two are worshipped elaborately during the forenoon *puja*.

A Pallava king Simhavarman was responsible for gilding the *Kanakasabha* with gold. Nataraja was the tutelary deity of the Chola kings and many of them have contributed to the expansion and upkeep of the temple. Many Chola kings had their coronation in Chidambaram. They built the outer walls, the inner sanctums and the *gopuras*. The Pandya kings continued the work of maintenance and upkeep of the Nataraja temple followed by the Vijayanagara king Krishnadeva Raya who completed the north *gopura*. In the same premises there is a shrine for Lord Vishnu, or Govindaraja as He is known here. He is one of the witnesses of Nataraja’s dance. He is seen in his reclining posture. This is a happy confluence of *Saivism* and *Vaishnavism*.

**Rituals and Festivals**

The Dikshitars, hereditary priests of the temple are in charge of the administration as well as the conduct of rituals and festivals. They are supposed to have been brought by Lord Siva Himself to Chidambaram to witness His dance. They were said to have originally been three thousand strong but now they number a few hundreds only. Patanjali is believed to have codified the ritual practices of the Chidambaram temple which are being followed even today. *Pujas* are performed six times a day. Of particular interest is the daily *abhisheka* to the *Ratnasabhapati* (ruby) icon and the *Spatika Linga* conducted in the Eastern part of the *Kanakasabha*. After the *abhisheka* and *puja* the *deeparadhana* lamps are waved both in front as well as at the back of *Ratnasabhapati*. The ruby icon shines resplendent and it is a sight for the gods to watch.

Six important festivals are celebrated in a year at Chidambaram. It is interesting to note that daily *abhishekams* are not performed to the main idol of Nataraja. Six times a year Nataraja is brought out of the *Chitsabha* and elaborate *abhisheka* and *puja* lasting several hours are performed. During the *Ardra* festival in December-January and the *Ani Tirumana-Janam* festival in June-July, the *abhisheka* is performed at the thousand- pillared hall and the other four *abhishekas* are held at the *Kanakasabha* itself. During the two major festivals mentioned above, Nataraja himself is taken around the streets of Chidambaram fully decked in all His splendour. This is perhaps a unique instance of the main deity playing the part of the *Utsava Murti*. The six main *abhishekams* are held as follows: in April-May, when the presiding star is *Sravana*; in June-July, when the presiding star is *Utra*; in August-September, on the fourteenth day of the bright half
of Sīmha; in September-October, on the fourteenth day of the bright half of Kanya; in December-January, when the presiding star is Ardra; and, in February-March, on the fourteenth day of the bright half of Kumbha. Huge crowds congregate for these abhishekams and participate in the proceedings enthusiastically.

**Hymns on Siva**

The palm-leaf manuscripts containing the Tevarā hymns, those beautiful soul-filling songs composed in praise of Lord Siva by Sundaramurti Nayanar, Jnanasambandar, and Appar were discovered at the Sabhanayaka temple by King Rajaraja Chola. These hymns have now become part of the daily worship at all Siva temples. It was in Chidambaram that the famous Priya Puranam, which extols the lives and devotion of various Saivite saints and devotees was composed by Sekkizhar in the 12th Century.

**Saints associated with Chidambaram**

There have been innumerable saints who have been associated with Lord Nataraja and the Chidambaram temple. Apart from Patanjali, Vyaghrapada, the four Tamil Saivite saints who have sung in the Lord’s praise, and Sekkizhar who wrote the lives of the 63 Saivite saints, Vyasa, Sanaka, and Adi Shankara have also worshipped Sri Nataraja. Closely interwoven with Chidambaram is the legend of Nandanar, the untouchable farm labourer. Deeply devoted to the Lord, Nandanar was not allowed to enter the temple by the orthodox priests of the place. Nandanar’s devotion grew deeper and he appealed to the Lord to grant His darshan at least once. Lord Nataraja responded to the plea of his dear devotee and bade His vehicle, the Nandi, who stood guard in front of Him, move, so that Nandanar could have His darshan unhindered from outside the temple itself. This miracle opened the eyes of the orthodox who included Nandanar’s landlord-employer. The entire crowd craved Nandanar’s forgiveness and eulogised him in the highest terms. Nandanar’s legend has been movingly retold in a group of songs composed by Gopalakrishna Bharati, musician-composer, and a great devotee of Lord Nataraja, himself. Besides this, Bharati has composed a number of songs in praise of Nataraja. The 16th Century saint Appayya Dikshita was a great devotee of Nataraja and he spent the best part of his life at Chidambaram.

**Other places associated with Nataraja’s dance**

**Madurai:** Patanjali and Vyaghrapada who had come to Madurai to witness the marriage of Lord Siva with Meenakshi wanted to hurry back to Chidambaram in order to witness the Lord’s dance at noon. The Lord then promised that He would dance at Madurai itself. This dance at Madurai is known as Sundara Tandava, so named after Lord Sundareswara. The dance hall here is known as Rajathasabha.

**Tiruvalangadu:** The story of Kali and Siva dancing in competition and the Lord quelling Kali’s pride is retold here. The great woman saint Karaikal Ammāiyar is supposed to have witnessed the Lord’s dance here. The dance hall here is known as Ratnasabha.
Kuttalam: Nataraja is represented here as a painting and not as an idol. There are innumerable paintings here and the temple is justly famous as the Chitrasabha.

Tiruvengadu: This temple is known as Adichitsabha and the local legends say that this temple pre-dates Chidambaram. Siva's dance here is described as being the very embodiment of the light of knowledge.

Tirunelveli: The dance hall here is known as Tamrasabha.

In all Siva temples in South India, there are separate shrines for Lord Nataraja and his consort Sivakamasundari. The calendar of religious events listing the six abhishekas are scrupulously followed as at Chidambaram. Nataraja also finds representation in North Indian temples and sculptures. Nataraja is famous throughout the world and His is perhaps the most sculpted image of all Hindu gods. Nataraja depicts the best in art and represents the highest in esoteric and metaphysical concepts.

Hymns on Nataraja

Given below are (translations of) two songs in praise of Lord Nataraja:

Title: Enneramum
(Composed by Gopalakrishna Bharati)

I want to remain in Thy presence, always, O Lord. In Puliyur which abounds in coconut groves you are the Lord of the Golden Dancing Hall, the famed Sivaganga Tank and the deva sabha. [Here, we are also blessed with the] darshan of Sivakami. Grant to Thy devotees freedom from fear. Seeing this I wish to be singing always in Thy presence.

The five panchakshara steps, the flagstaff, the beauty of the temple, Thy supreme secret and the bell which assures, 'Fear Not' — all these serve to destroy delusion.

Thus freed I wish to be singing, in Thy presence for ever.

Ananda Natana Prakasam
(Composed by Muthuswami Dikshitar)

I seek the protection of the Lord of the Chitsabha, the Ananda Tandava Murti, who is also the Lord of Sivakamasundari. Shining like millions of suns, He, shines as Akasa (space) in the Heart of devotees and grants them happiness in worldly life and Liberation too. He is the protector of the weak and the One who granted Patanjali and Vyaghrapada the vision of His raised foot.

He wears the moon and Ganga and is famed as being Lord of all kshetras beginning from Kedara. He dons tiger's skin and the pure sky (space) is His garment. He is Lord of the three-thousand saints and possesses a tender heart.

Embodiment of the highest truth of the Vedas, He can be truly described only in the purest Advaitic terms. His Ananda Tandava performed to the accompaniment of music and instruments, expounds the profoundest of truths.
The Flood of Siva Supreme

By Subramania Bharati
(Translated by Prof K. Swaminathan)

A flood there is that flows within,
Without, and fills, and is indeed
All things that are. The sages call it
God. Out of that flood spring forth
Whatever we see and feel and know.
Boundless, whole, free, unattached.

Whether That is being or non-being
Even the wise are unsure,
Empty space, Awareness, cloud
That showers down many different
powers —
Combining atoms, splitting them;
Gross, minute, subtler than the
subtlest;
With no identity with all
Identical; One alone, yet many;
Omnipresent, omnipotent,
Omniscient, all creeds proclaim it.

It is itself the one who prays,
The prayer, the prayed-for and the
fruit;
The sight, the seer and the seen.
Majestic, indescribable,
Few, few are there who know It. Those
Who know It know the ultimate Truth,
The fruit of life. Free from all sorrow
And imperfection, all their wishes
Fulfilled, with nothing to desire,
They live even here in bliss divine
Praised as gods by dwellers on earth.
Alone with that Alone, they need
Nothing and yet they rule the world.
This flood, O brother, is yours when you

But wish it, ready to spring forth,
A fount of nectar in your heart.

Very easy is the means whereby
This ever-available flood of bliss
Is made to flow into and through you.

It is enough to think of It.
Think; and this cool nectar bubbles
Up and fill your heart. Think, say,
"The flood of bliss divine which
flows
Ever as everything, everywhere
Flows through me, fills me to the
brim".

No ochre dress, no matted hair
You need to gain the state supreme;
The mental attitude will do.
No need for Shastras, the four
Vedas,
Sacred hymns if you but keep
In constant touch with your own heart.
No penance, discipline you need.

The faith that Siva, Siva alone
Exists, this is enough. Think! think

And say, "Siva, who is everywhere
As everything eternally,
'Now comes, flows through me, and
fills me';
Now the Siva-flood perennial
Flows through me, fills me to the
brim".

Such firm faith in the mind will do.
Raja Yoga: The Royal Path

By Prof. Eknath Eswaran

RAJA YOGA is a system of meditation which, while having something in common with Buddhist techniques, is entirely Hindu in origin and development. It is not a creed, but a method, which may be used by all those who seek to know, experientially, the nature of the Ultimate Reality called God in the various religions of the world. Those who have practised it in India are the aristocracy, not of birth, but of enterprise and energy.

The Sanskrit word yoga comes from the same root as the English word yoke. In arithmetic yoga means addition; but in philosophy it has the double connotation of uniting and bringing under discipline. The scriptures give more than one definition of yoga. According to the Katha Upanishad, "When all the senses are stilled, when the mind is at rest, when the intellect wavers not, then, say the wise, is reached the highest state. This calm of the senses and the mind has been defined as yoga." The Bhagavad Gita implies that yoga can carry us beyond suffering when it says, "It is the breaking of contact with pain." The words of the Bible, "Be still and know that I am God!", may be said to indicate both the method and the goal.

There is still a widespread impression in the West that yoga is a cross between physical contortions and professional hypnotism, an impression that has gradually developed through what is put out by the popular press as occult literature. It is true that the yogi may develop what should be called supernormal, not supernatural, powers such as the ability to bring the automatic nervous system under conscious control; just as we would call supernormal, not supernatural, the consummate skill of a tennis champion or a trapeze artiste. Moreover, these supernormal powers have very little to do with the aim of Raja Yoga, which is to help man raise himself to the highest level of consciousness possible for him.

From the point of view of their final significance, all the Hindu scriptures may be called treatises on yoga. The Hindus of ancient India sought ultimate reality not as an intellectual concept, nor even as an ethical activity, but as a creative principle of life to guide them to a higher state of consciousness. The Bhagavad Gita describes four paths for this great endeavour to suit four different kinds of humanity. They are: Karma Yoga or the path of action, Jnana Yoga or the path of knowledge, Bhakti Yoga or the path of devotion and, last but not least, Raja Yoga or the Royal Path through a strange experiment performed by the mind on

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, July 1967.
1 Katha Upanishad, II. III. 10.
2 Bhagavad Gita, VI. 19.
3 Psalms XLVI. 10.
the mind with the mind. The last one, Raja Yoga, is for the scientific man who insists on facts and their experimental verification.

"There is no knowledge like Sankhya, no power like Yoga," runs an ancient saying in India. These two together form one system — Sankhya providing a theoretical exposition of the human predicament, and Yoga dealing with the practical steps to be taken to achieve liberation from it. Those who try to separate theory and practice — Sankhya and Yoga — are called childish in the Bhagavad Gita.

Kapila is believed to be the father of Sankhya, and might have lived, judging from the influence he exercised on the Buddha, about the sixth century B.C. According to him, the phenomenal world is founded upon the two fundamental and autonomous categories of Purusha and Prakriti, spirit and matter. The spirit is eternally free, ever serene, self-sentient, while matter as the primordial source of the phenomenal world is ever changing. Perhaps a parallel to this ceaseless process of change may be seen in the theory of flux to which Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, referred when he said that we could never plunge into the same river twice. This is true not only of the physical world, but also of the mental world or the stream of consciousness in which images flow ceaselessly from moment to moment.

It may be pointed out in this connection that Sankhya regards the physical and the psychical as nothing more than two different modifications of primordial matter, there being no difference of an ontological order between them. That this view is not opposed to the discoveries of modern science may be seen from the considered opinion of such a distinguished scientist as Sir Arthur Eddington. He says, "The external world of physics has thus become a world of shadows. In removing our illusions we removed the substance, for indeed we have seen that substance is one of the greatest of our illusions." Says Professor Karl Pearson: "There is no better exercise for the mind than the endeavour to reduce the perceptions we have of 'external things' to the simple sense impressions by which we know them. The arbitrary distinction between outside and inside ourselves is then clearly seen to be one merely of everyday practical convenience."

Sankhya is dualistic in contrast to the monistic outlook of the Upanishads, and accepts as real both the world of Becoming and Being, both matter and Spirit. The sages of ancient India turned, in their quest for ultimate Reality to the world within, and claimed to have found it not in the objects of sense perception and intellectual cognition, not in Prakriti, but in that which guarantees the reality of these objects, the cognitive self or Purusha.

According to Kapila, all experience is based on the duality of the Spirit as the knowing subject and matter as the known.

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4 The Nature of the Physical World, p. XVI, Ann Arbor Paperbacks.
object. While the Spirit is ever-serene Being, matter is described as a state of tension of the three cosmic constituents of law, energy and inertia (sattwa, rajas and tamas). These three are said to be in a state of equilibrium in primordial matter until it begins to differentiate itself into the tremendous process of cosmic evolution.

The Sankhya theory may be briefly stated thus. The first product is the intellect which stands nearest to the spirit and reflects the consciousness of the Spirit in such a way that it appears to become conscious itself. From the intellect comes the ego-sense which is the principle of individuation. It gives rise to the feeling of I, me and mine, and leads the self to look upon itself as the agent of all action. Third comes the mind which is the coordinating centre between the five cognitive senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, and the five conative organs of speech, locomotion, grasping, excretion and reproduction.

When Patanjali defines yoga as restraining the modifications of the Thinking Principle, the definition has to be understood in the light of the theory of knowledge put forward by Sankhya. The term Thinking Principle is a comprehensive one for the whole psychic apparatus which includes the intellect, ego-sense and mind knowledge or perception. It is because the Thinking Principle assumes all the forms presented to it by the senses, imagination, emotion or memory that they tend to leave behind them impressions that may be permanent. These impressions or latencies, called samskaras in Sanskrit, which continue in the subconscious until they are revived under proper excitation, are of paramount importance in Yoga psychology, because our life is looked upon as a continuous activisation of these dynamic latencies. The Herculean task of Raja Yoga is to ‘burn out’ these latencies by restraining the modifications of the Thinking Principle.

Thus long before psychoanalysis made its appearance in the West, Sankhya psychology had brought out in unmistakable fashion the dominant role played by the subconscious in shaping human destiny. While most Western psychologists are reluctant to believe that the subconscious can be consciously controlled, Patanjali maintains, that it is possible for us to enter into the dark region of the subconscious and bring it under complete conscious control. When the vast continent of the subconscious is brought up to the conscious level, claims Raja Yoga, man passes, here and now, “from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.”

Patanjali divides his book into four parts. The first deals with the nature and purpose of Raja Yoga, the modifications of the Thinking Principle, and the eight limbs or steps of the system. The second is devoted to the means of attaining Illumination, the mental states which stand in the way, and the four-fold theme of suffering, its causes, cessation, and the means thereof. The third part deals with...
siddhis or supernormal powers such as telepathy and clairvoyance which may develop through the practice of Raja Yoga, though we are warned over and over again by the ancient seers not to attach any importance to their acquisition, but to put ethical improvement and spiritual progress before them. The explanation given by Raja Yoga is very simple. Each mind is a separate unit in one sense, and part of a collective mind in another. Through one-pointed meditation the Yogi passes from the individual mind to the cosmic mind or consciousness which is not bound by the laws of time and space.

It was the Buddha who said of the mind that there is nothing more rebellious when it is undisciplined, and nothing more obedient when disciplined. Raja Yoga disciplines the mind by first separating consciousness from physical sensations and then from the thoughts in the mind. It is a scientific system with eight limbs, the first two being ethical, the next three physical, and the last three psychological.

The first two limbs or the ethical part deal with abstentions and observances, don'ts and do's, for achieving purification of the mind.

Through the three physical limbs, Postures, Breath Control, and Withdrawal of the Senses, the yogi works through the body to the mind to make it, in the words of the Gita, "like the light of a lamp which does not flicker in a windless place." The main purpose of the postures or physical exercises developed by the sages of ancient India is to promote bodily health and to prepare the mind for rapid progress in meditation.

Raja Yoga regards the rhythm of breathing in the light of the theory that there exists a close connection between respiration and the states of mind. These breathing exercises are said to lead to prolonged suspension of breathing which in turn results in an increase in concentration of carbon dioxide in the blood; and this chemical change seems to help bring about a change in the quality of consciousness, thus facilitating the control of the mind.

The next step is the withdrawal of thought from the tyranny of the nerves in what is known as Abstraction in Christian mysticism and aims at gathering together the outgoing powers of the mind.

The above five are called external limbs of Raja Yoga, and the remaining three, which form the internal and the fundamental, may be described as deepening stages of meditation — dharana or concentration, dhyana or contemplation, and samadhi or identification.

According to Sankhya, the origin of human suffering lies in confusing Purusha with Prakriti, changeless Spirit with changing matter. By suffering here is meant, much more than physical or mental pain, the consciousness of being limited, bound, conditioned, which is inseparable from this human existence. It is in this sense that Patanjali uses the word.

Bhagavad Gita, VI. 19.
This suffering is not destructive and does not justify the charge of pessimism that has been brought against Hindu philosophy in the West. On the contrary, suffering is said to be an ontological necessity and provides, paradoxically enough, the means for putting an end to all suffering. It is by being thrown over and over again on the furnace of life that man comes to long for emancipation so that the cosmos may be said to have an ambivalent function — to fling man into suffering, temporarily, on the one hand, and to help him escape, permanently, on the other, from the Wheel of Becoming.

How then is man to achieve liberation from the human predicament, the central law of which seems to be suffering? To the Buddha the cause of suffering is the craving for sense experience; to Kapila and Patanjali it is nescience or ignorance of the nature of Reality. Says Patanjali: “To regard the non-eternal as eternal, the impure as pure, the painful as pleasant and the non-Atman as the Atman — this is ignorance.”8 This primeval ignorance, which is held responsible for all our suffering, may be compared to the Fall in the Hebrew-Christian tradition.

There is but one way to terminate this primeval confusion, and that is to have direct knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. He who knows the Spirit crosses over the sea of Becoming, declare the Upanishads. Ignorance means bondage; knowledge means liberation. With the direct perception of Reality, man is said to achieve his liberation at once, and the Spirit regains its original freedom or sees its own native form, as Patanjali puts it with striking simplicity. In the language of psychoanalysis, the dissipation of the repressing factor immediately results in automatic self-recollection.

This may be illustrated with the traditional story of the King’s son, who was banished to the forest as a child and brought up there as a forester. He came, of course, to believe that he was really a forester. On learning who the young man was, a Minister from the Court tells him, “Thou art not a forester, thou art a King’s son.” Immediately the image of the forester is erased from the young man’s mind, and he becomes the King’s son again. It is to enable the self-deluded forester, to regain his royal status that primordial matter goes through the long drawn-out drama on the stage of the phenomenal world. Purusha’s (Spirit’s) purpose is the cause of Prakriti’s (Matter’s) evolution.

Liberation means the experiential recognition of the Self as the same as the Reality which is beyond the laws of time, space and causality, which is in no way involved in the ceaseless flux of the phenomenal world and which, therefore, is ever free and immortal. This is the moksha of the Hindus, the nirvana of the Buddhists.

There has been no greater discovery in the whole history of mankind than that contained in the three simple Sanskrit words Tat Twam Asi — That Thou

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Art — which embody the highest teaching of the Upanishads. 'That' stands for Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, from whom all words recoil, as Shankara puts it with stark grandeur. 'Thou' stands for Atman, the individual Self, the Being behind every human being.

This direct perception of Ultimate Reality does not produce anything new, and is a simple awakening in the sense in which the Buddha uses it in his answer to the puzzled disciples.

"Are you a god?" they ask.
"No," says the Buddha.
"Are you an angel?" they ask.
"No," says the Buddha.
"Are you a saint?" they ask.
"No," says the Buddha.
"Then what are you?" they ask at last.

"I am awake," says the Buddha, giving the literal meaning of the word Buddha.

This kind of awakening cannot come according to Raja Yoga, through the agency of the intellect which is itself only a highly developed form of matter. Plato takes up a similar position when he claims that noesis is the highest kind of knowledge, which is immediate and supra-intellectual.

Such direct perception of Reality is beyond the senses and the intellect and can be obtained only through a transcendent experience in which there is complete identity between the subject and the object, between the knower and the known. The Upanishads do not dismiss the intellect as a useless guide. It is very useful for dealing with finite things in the phenomenal word of subject and object duality, but it has to give place to another mode of knowing for the perception of infinite Reality. This view finds corroboration in the philosophy of Kant that the very organization of our intellect, which is bound for ever to its innate forms of perception, space, time and causality, excludes us from a knowledge of the spaceless, timeless Reality that is the ding-an-sich or the 'thing-in-itself.'

This experiential knowledge of the Ultimate Reality is said to be self-established, self-evidencing, self-luminous. Nothing can ever be the same after. With this identification comes to an end for the illumined man, the ceaseless tension between the Spirit and matter that goes on throughout the cosmic process.

To attain liberation from the human predicament is not to run away from the duties and responsibilities of life. The liberated man works in the world process no longer as a helpless ego, but as a living center of the Supreme Spirit. It is these illumined men, living on the highest pinnacle of consciousness, who dedicate their lives to the mighty task of elevating mankind.

Patanjali takes over the cosmology and the psychology of Kapila almost in its entirety, but he makes an important addition by bringing the concept of the personal God into the system of Raja Yoga, holding that devotion to a personal God can be a very valuable aid in practising Raja Yoga. If you believe in a personal God, says Patanjali, it will be
very helpful. If you don’t, the task will be very much harder. Patanjali does not waste any words on the nature of Ultimate Reality because the only way one can know it is by realising it for oneself in the Yoga climax called Samadhi.

Through this identification or illumination the Yogi passes permanently beyond the human condition of being limited and bound. It is impossible to describe the nature of the experience except in the way the Upanishads try to do it — neti, neti; not this, not this; As Meister Eckhart puts it, “Everything stands for God and you see only God in all the world. It is just as when one looks straight at the Sun for a while; afterwards everything he looks at has the image of the Sun in it.”

All human experience is to lead man, according to Yoga, to this final consummation towards which all creation moves in travail. As the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad sings ecstatically, “Pure like crystal water is that Self, the only seer, the One without a second. He is the kingdom of Brahman — man’s highest goal, supreme treasure, greatest bliss.”

The illuminated man or the perfected man has gone deep into his own ground and learnt to know himself at the root of his own being. He has found at last what he was searching for — personal proof of his identity with the Supreme Self whom the Upanishads call Sat Chit Ananda (Absolute Existence, Consciousness and Bliss), Tat Twam Asi (That Thou Art).

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THAT THOU ART

For very earnest sadhakas who are free from desires (of worldly advantage), the enquiry into the real nature of the being denoted by the word ‘thou’ is alone sufficient for winning Liberation, without any enquiry into the truth of the Being denoted by the word ‘That’. (146)

Revelation added the words ‘That and ‘art’ in order to (help to) turn inwards the minds of other sadhakas, whose mentality is unripe, not for anything else. (147)

O mind, thou hast suffered thinking ‘I am a jiva; do not fall into worse delusion by believing ‘I am Brahman’; in the Transcendental State there is no one (no individual) answering to the name ‘I’. (148)

— Guru Ramana Vachana Mala.
I am There

By James Dillet Freeman

Do you need me?
I am there.
You cannot see me, yet I am the light you see by.
You cannot hear me, yet I speak through your voice.
You cannot feel me, yet I am the power at work in your hands.
I am at work, though you do not understand my ways.
I am at work, though you do not recognise my works.
I am not strange visions. I am not mysteries.
Only in absolute stillness, beyond Self, can you know me as I am,
and then but as a feeling and a faith.

Yet I am there, yet I hear, yet I answer.
When you need me, I am there.
Even when you feel most alone, I am there
Even in your fears, I am there.
Even in your pain, I am there.
I am there when you pray and when you do not pray.
I am in you, and you are in me.
Only in your mind can you feel separate from me,
for only in your mind are the mists of 'yours' and 'mine'.
Yet only with your mind can you know me and experience me.
Empty your heart of empty fears.
When you get yourself out of the way, I am there.
You can by yourself do nothing, but I can do all. And I am in all.
Though you may not see the good, good is there, for I am there.
I am there because I have to be, because I am.
Only in me does the world have meaning; only out of me does the
world take form; only because of me does the world go forward.
I am the law on which the movement of the stars and the growth
of living cells are founded.
I am the love that is the law's fulfilling.
I am assurance. I am peace. I am oneness.
I am the law that you can live by. I am the love that you can cling
to. I am your assurance.

I am your peace. I am one with you. I AM.
Though you fail to find me, I do not fail you.
Your faith in me is unsure, my faith in you never wavers, because
I know you, because I love you.

Beloved, I am there.
The Yaksha Prashna

(From The Mahabharata)

On one occasion during the exile of the Pandava brothers in the forest, the Mahabharata tells, they gave chase to a stag which had disturbed the hermitage of a Brahmin. They failed to catch up with it and were left hot and thirsty in the forest. From the top of a tree they espied some way off a clear lake, and Yudhishthira sent Nakula, the second youngest, to get water from it. When he reached the lake, Nakula heard a voice forbidding him to drink. The speaker claimed to be a Yaksha and the owner of the lake and forbade Nakula to touch it until he had answered certain questions. If he disobeyed, he was told, he would die.

Nakula ignores him, drinks the water and drops down dead. When he does not return, Sahadeva is sent to see what has happened, then Arjuna, then Bhima, and the same fate overtakes each one of them. Finally Yudhishthira goes himself. Unlike his brothers, he admits the right of the owner of the lake to set a condition for taking water from it and undertakes to answer the questions. He does so satisfactorily and the Yaksha thereupon restores his brothers to life. Finally it transpires that the supposed Yaksha is really Dharma personified as a god.

Dharma is Yudhisthira’s father, so a happy reunion takes place. He confirms that the expected war will be fought after their exile is over and that they will be victorious, especially as Krishna is on their side, adding significantly: ‘Where dharma is, there will victory be; where Krishna is there will dharma be’.

Weary with hunting ever elusive happiness through the forest of life, a man seeks the waters of tranquillity, but here too he meets a rebuff, being told that he must first understand the meaning and values of life. To defy this warning is fatal. If he meets it he finds that it is Dharma, the law of righteousness that is challenging him and that this law is his father and protector. It guarantees his victory through divine guidance in the war with the forces of evil which he still has to wage.

The questions are put in groups of four. Some of the answers seem clear; others need a commentary. Many are symbolical. They are concerned with the vital subject of dharma. Indeed, the whole vast Mahabharata can be regarded as a text book on dharma. Skill in recognizing it is needed as well as integrity in following it, and Yudhisthira has both.

Yaksha

1. What makes the sun shine?
2. What attendants surround him?

Based largely on the annotated translation by K. Balasubramania Iyer published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. With grateful acknowledgement to the publishers.

This was originally serialised in The Mountain Path, between October 1967 and October 1968 (inclusive).
3. Who makes him set?
4. In what is he firmly established?

**Yudhishtira**

1. Brahma makes the sun shine.
2. The devas are his attendants.
3. Dharma makes him set.
4. He is firmly established in Truth.

*The sun here means Atma. Brahma (some times taken to mean ‘the Veda’) enables the Atma to shine without being overclouded by the senses. The divine qualities attend on it. Dharma is the law or path by which it moves and sets. And it is established in the Truth beyond the three gunas.*

**Yaksha**

5. By what does one become learned?
6. By what does one attain greatness?
7. By what does one acquire a second to oneself?
8. O King, by what means does one become wise?

**Yudhishtira**

5. One becomes learned by Vedic study.
6. One attains greatness by *tapas*.
7. One acquires a second by steadfastness.
8. One becomes wise by the service of elders.

*The terms srotriya and sruti here used show that it is not ordinary book-learning that is meant but Vedic knowledge.*

*Tapas is not mere austerity, the main features are concentration and self-control. It is defined in a later answer (to question No.82) as adherence to one’s own dharma. It is by steadfastness that a person gains control of himself and can use himself as a ‘second’, a servant of the Atma. By service of the elders is meant primarily devotion to the guru, since this is essential for attaining wisdom.*

**Yaksha**

9. What is the divine attribute in Brahmans?
10. What is their characteristic virtue?
11. What is characteristically human about them?
12. What is the corruption of their nature?
Yudhishtira

9. Knowledge of the Vedas is their divine attribute.
10. *Tapas* is their characteristic virtue.
11. Liability to death is characteristically human in them.
12. Arrogance is the corruption of their nature.

*It is to be remembered that the Vedas were not written down but transmitted orally by Brahmin teachers.*

*The word translated 'arrogance' could imply also 'contempt for others' or 'defamatory speech'*. 
Yaksha

13. What is the divine attribute of *kshatriyas*?
14. What is their characteristic virtue?
15. What is characteristically human about them?
16. What is the corruption of their nature?

Yudhishtira

13. Arrows and other weapons are the divine attribute of *kshatriyas*.
14. *Yajnas* (ritualistic sacrifices) are their characteristic virtue.
15. Fear is characteristically human in them.
16. Desertion (of those in distress) is their corruption.¹

Yaksha

17. What *sama* (Vedic chant) is it that is appropriate for a *yajna* (ritualistic sacrifice)?
18. What *yajus* (Vedic text) is appropriate for a *yajna*?
19. What is it that chooses the *yajna*?
20. What is it that the *yajna* cannot dispense with?

Yudhishtira

17. *Prana* is the most appropriate *sama* for *yajna*.
18. Mind (*manas*) is the most appropriate *yajus* for a *yajna*.
19. It is the *rik* which chooses the *yajna*.
20. It is the *rik* which the *yajna* cannot dispense with.

Vedic religion contained also an important ritualistic element, and knowledge of its technicalities was an important field of culture. However, the commentator, Neelakantha, mentions also the inner sacrifice of *jnana yoga*, to which Yudhishtira's replies can refer. For this the harmonisation of breath and mind is necessary, while the *rik* or mantra is essential to it and helps to shape it.

Yaksha

21. What is the best of things that fall?
22. What is the best of things that are buried?
23. What is the best of quadrupeds?
24. What is the best of those born?

¹ Yudhishtira and his brothers had themselves been guilty of this fault when they left Draupadi defenceless in her humiliation, sacrificing the spirit of *dharma* for the letter. It needed Krishna to tell them so.
Yudhishtira

21. Rain is the best of things that fall.
22. Seed is the best of things buried.
23. The cow is the best of quadrupeds.
24. A son is the best of those born.

Yaksha

25. What man can be said not really to live although he enjoys sense objects, has a mind, is respected by society, breathes and is accepted by all?

Yudhishtira

25. One who does not make the prescribed offerings to the gods, guests, dependants, the ancestors and the Self, though breathing, does not live.

Yudhishtira rightly takes this question as referring to the householder who neglects the traditional panchamahayajnas (five great obligations or sacrifices) enjoined in the Smritis as obligatory for a householder.

Yaksha

26. What is weightier than the earth?
27. What is loftier than the sky?
28. What is faster than the wind?
29. What is more numerous than blades of grass?

Yudhishtira

26. The mother is weightier than the earth.
27. The father is loftier than the sky.
28. The mind is faster than the wind.
29. Thoughts are more numerous than blades of grass.

Weightier as a basis for sustaining one’s life. Loftier as meriting respect.

Yaksha

30. What sleeps with its eyes open?
31. What does not move after birth?
32. What is without heart?
33. What expands by its own force?
Yudhishtira

30. A fish sleeps with its eyes open.
31. An egg does not move after birth.
32. A stone is without heart.
33. A river expands by its own force.

Questions of this type are apparently meaningless, like a modern 'intelligence test'. In fact, however, they contain references to the scriptures or traditional parallels which Yudhishtira is able to take up.

For instance, the Purusha (spirit) moving from the waking state to the dream state and from that to dreamless sleep is compared to a fish. The body and its faculties and their stimulating impulses are the not-self. The Self retains awareness (open eyes) in whichever of the three states they are in.

The next answer implies that the Self is in the unenlightened individual but encased in nescience like the chick in its shell.

Ashma, the word for stone, means etymologically 'without body'. It is the dark counterpart of the bodiless state.

The nadi in the fourth question refers not only to a physical river but to the flow of consciousness.

Yaksha

34. Who is the traveller's friend?
35. Who is the home-dweller's friend?
36. Who is the sick man's friend?
37. Who is the friend of the dying?

Yudhishtira

34. A company is the traveller's friend.
35. His wife is the home-dweller's friend.
36. The doctor is the friend of the sick.
37. Gifts (made by him) are the friend of the dying.

Gifts made in life are said in the sastras to tide a man over his death. At least when dying a man should make gifts.

Yaksha

38. Who is the guest of all beings?
39. What is the eternal dharma?
40. What is amrita, great King?
41. What is this whole universe?

This is one of the most difficult set of questions. It is not included in the text of the Mahabharata published by the Bhandarkar Institute, Poona, but only referred to in a note as being given in other editions. Various interpretations have been suggested.

Yudhishtira

38. Agni (fire) is the guest of all beings.
39. Soma is the eternal dharma.
40. Cow's milk is amrita.
41. Vayu (air or wind) is this whole universe.

Fire was the guest of all in that a sacrificial fire had to be maintained in every household for the performance of sacrifice. Symbolically, fire is the aspiration in the heart of man and therefore the divine guest.

The sacrifice demanded by dharma required oblation of soma into the sacred fire. Symbolically soma was the intuition or ecstasy offered to the fire of aspiration.

Amrita or nectar stands for ecstasy; the true ecstasy is not inebriation but the sober, substantial wisdom symbolised by milk.

Vayu is referred to in the Upanishads as the outer form of Brahman, since it pervades everything.

Yaksha

42. What is it that travels alone?
43. What is born again?
44. What is the antidote to snow or fog?
45. What is the great receptacle?

Yudhishtira

42. The Sun travels alone.
43. The moon is born again.
44. Fire is the antidote to snow or fog.
45. The earth is the great receptacle.

When the phenomenal world composed of Vayu (in the last of the previous set of questions) disappears, Atma (the sun) remains. Atma (the sun) remains alone, while the mind (the moon)
is born again, as the world is projected forth by it. The world thus projected is enveloped in the fog or snow of avidya (ignorance). This is dispersed by the fire of knowledge. The earth stands for nature.

**Yaksha**

46. What is the sole way to dharma?
47. What is the sole means to fame?
48. What alone leads to heaven?
49. What is the one source of happiness?

**Yudhishtira**

46. Integrity is the sole way of dharma.
47. Giving is the sole means to fame.
48. Truth alone leads to heaven.
49. Character is the only source of happiness.

**Yaksha**

50. Who is the self of a man?
51. Who is the friend bestowed on him by destiny?
52. What helps to sustain him?
53. What is his best resort?

**Yudhishtira**

50. A man's son is his self.
51. His wife is the friend bestowed on him by destiny.
52. Rain helps to sustain him.
53. Giving is his best resort.

*A son performs the ritual for a man's posthumous welfare. Symbolically the son stands for the new life in one who has been 'born again of the Spirit'.*

**Yaksha**

54. What is the best of things praise-worthy?
55. What is the greatest wealth?
56. What is the greatest gain?
57. What is the greatest happiness?

**Yudhishtira**

54. Integrity is the best of things praise-worthy.
Learning is the greatest wealth.
Health is the greatest gain.
Contentment is the greatest happiness.

Yaksha

What is the highest dharma in the world?
What is the dharma which always bears fruit?
Control of what secures one from grief?
With whom does association not come to an end?

Yudhishtira

Universal benevolence is the highest dharma.
Vedic dharma always bears fruit.
Control of mind secures one from grief.
Association with the good never comes to an end.

Neelakantha, the traditional commentator, suggests that the first of these questions implies that the highest dharma is that of the sannyasin, since he is not required to do harm to any.

He holds the second reply to mean pranava, the use of the mantra OM.

Control of the mind, he says, leads to the Atma, which is beyond grief.

By 'association with the good' he understands Sat Sangh, the association with the Enlightened, which even death does not terminate.

Yaksha

Renunciation of what makes one beloved?
Renunciation of what frees one from grief?
Renunciation of what makes one prosperous?
Renunciation of what makes one happy?

Yudhishtira

Renunciation of pride makes one beloved.
Renunciation of anger frees one from grief.
Renunciation of desire makes one wealthy.
Renunciation of grasping makes one happy.

This question should be numbered 62. However the numbering as per the original text has been retained.
65. For what reason does one make gifts to Brahmins?
66. For what reason does one make gifts to actors and dancers?
67. For what reason does one make gifts to dependants?
68. For what reason does one make gifts to kings?

65. One makes gifts to a Brahmin for the sake of dharma.
66. One makes gifts to actors and dancers for the sake of fame.
67. One makes gifts to dependants for their maintenance.
68. One makes gifts to a king out of fear.

For the sake of dharma means for the right performance of sacrifices and other rituals.

69. By what is the world enveloped?
70. Why does it not shine?
71. Why does one abandon friends?
72. Why does one not attain heaven?

69. The world is enveloped in ignorance.
70. It does not shine owing to darkness.
71. One abandons friends out of avarice.
72. One does not attain heaven owing to attachment.

73. What man can be regarded as lifeless?
74. What kingdom can be regarded as lifeless?
75. What shraddha (ritual offering to the ancestors) can be regarded as lifeless?
76. What yajna (ritualistic sacrifice) can be regarded as lifeless?

73. A poverty-stricken person can be regarded as lifeless.
74. A kingdom without a ruler can be regarded as lifeless.
75. A shraddha performed by unqualified persons may be regarded as lifeless.
76. A yajna in which remuneration is not made to those who perform it may be regarded as lifeless.

77. What is the path to be followed?
78. What is spoken of as water?
79. What is food?
80. What is poison?
81. Tell me, what is the right time for shraddha? After that you may drink the water and take some away with you.

**Yudhishtira**

77. The way of the righteous is the path.
78. Akasa (space or ether) is spoken of as water.
79. The earth is food.
80. Desire is poison.
81. When one meets a man qualified in the Vedas is the time for shraddha. What do you think, O Yaksha?

The first answer indicates that it is no use saying that one path or doctrine is right and others wrong. Wherever one can find a true guide is the path. It is based on the answer found later to question 120: “Logic is inconclusive; the scriptures are divergent; there is no sage whose opinion is final; the truth of dharma lies hidden; therefore the only way is to follow the path of the great.”

Nature on a higher plane is spoken of as ‘akasa’, on a lower as water. Akasa may also symbolise Brahman and water may symbolise man so that this answer implies the Mahavakya: ‘That thou art’.

Why does the Yaksha follow four such fundamental questions with an apparently trivial one about the right time for performing a rite? It is obviously a trap, and Yudhishtira evades it: just as the right path is that on which one can find a qualified guide, so, he says, the time to perform it.

It would be nice to think that Yudhishtira’s closing counter-question showed a sense of humour and meant, “So you see I am not so easily caught!”

**Yaksha**

82. What is the characteristic of tapas?
83. What is known as dama (self-control)?
84. What is said to be the greatest patience?
85. What is honoured as modesty?

**Yudhishtira**

82. Following one’s own dharma is tapas.
83. Mind control is self-control.
84. Putting up with the pairs of opposites is the greatest patience.
85. Shunning improper conduct is modesty.
Sri Krishna twice insists in the Gita on the importance of following one's own dharma, even though that of another seems preferable.

Yaksha

86. What is said to be knowledge, O King?
87. What is known as sama?
88. What is the greatest compassion?
89. What is the invincible foe of man?
90. What is said to be straightforwardness?
91. What is the incurable disease?
92. Who can be called a good person?
93. Who can be called a bad person?

Yudhishtira

86. Knowledge is understanding the meaning of things.
87. Sama is peace of mind.
88. The greatest compassion is to desire the happiness of all.
89. Anger is man's invincible foe.
90. Straightforwardness is equal-mindedness towards all.
91. Avarice is the incurable disease.
92. One who seeks the good of all may be called good.
93. And one who has no compassion may be called bad.

Yaksha

94. What, O King, is meant by delusion?
95. What is pride?
96. What can be called indolence?
97. What is known as misery?

Yudhishtira

94. Ignorance of dharma is delusion.
95. Thinking highly of oneself is pride.
96. Neglecting one's dharma is indolence.
97. Spiritual ignorance (ajnana) is misery.

Yaksha

98. What is the steadfastness (sthairya) spoken of by sages?
99. What is meant by courage (dhaurya)?
100. What is known as the best ablation (snana)?
101. What is meant by charity (dana)?
Yudhishtira

98. Adherence to one’s own dharma is steadfastness.
99. Control of the senses is courage.
100. Getting rid of the impurities of the mind is the best ablution.
101. Extending protection to all is charity.

With regard to this last answer, it is to be remembered that Yudhishtira was a kshatriya whose special dharma was protection of the oppressed.

Yaksha

102. Who is to be considered a learned man (pandita)?
103. Who can be called an atheist?
104. Who is a fool?
105. What is desire (kama)?
106. What is envy?

Yudhishtira

102. One who knows dharma can be considered learned.
103. 104. An atheist is a fool.
105. Desire is the cause of rebirth.
106. Envy is heart-burning.

It will be seen that Yudhishtira makes the second and third questions answer each other. One is reminded of the Biblical saying: “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘there is no God’.” Actually the Sanskrit word nastika (atheist) means rather one who does not believe in a non-material world.

The word translated here as ‘rebirth’ is samsara. It is only as long as there is craving for something that one can be drawn back to some form of rebirth.

Yaksha

107. What is said to be the ego-sense?
108. What is called conceit?
109. What is known as the greatest destiny?
110. What is meant by slander?

Yudhishtira

107. The ego-sense is complete ignorance.
108. Parading one’s dharma is conceit.
109. The highest destiny comes from giving (dana).
110. Slander is speaking ill of others.
Ahankara, the ego-sense, means believing oneself to be a separate individual being and is defined as maha ajnana or avidya, the supreme ignorance.

Yaksha

111. Dharma, artha (prosperity) and kama (desires or pleasure) are mutually antagonistic (and yet are all legitimate goals in life). How can they co-exist when they are contrary by nature?

Yudhishtira

111. When one's wife is in accord with dharma the three can co-exist.

Yaksha

112. Oh Lord of the Bharatas, who goes to everlasting hell? Answer quickly!

Yudhishtira

112. One who voluntarily invites a poor Brahmin and then refuses him charity goes to everlasting hell. One who imputes falsehood to the Vedas, the Dharmasastras, the Brahmins, the gods, and the rites performed for the ancestors goes to everlasting hell. One who is wealthy but refuses charity and stints himself out of avarice goes to everlasting hell.

Yaksha

113. Oh King, how does one become a Brahmin? Is it by birth or conduct or study of the Vedas, or hearing or reflecting on truth? Answer clearly.

Yudhishtira

113. Listen, venerable Yaksha! It is not birth or study or Vedic learning which makes one a Brahmin. It is quite definitely one's conduct which does. Everyone should be careful about his conduct and especially a Brahmin. One whose conduct remains unsullied is not a loser, but one who gives up good conduct perishes with it. Gurus and disciples who merely study the scriptures are to be regarded as fools. Only a man of good conduct is really wise. Even one who has studied the four Vedas is to be regarded as lower than a shudra if his conduct is bad. Only he who regularly performs the fire sacrifice and controls his senses can be called a Brahmin.

Yaksha

114. What does he gain who speaks courteously?
115. What does he gain who acts circumspectly?
116. What does he gain who makes many friends?
117. What does he gain who is devoted to dharma?
Yudhishtira

114. He who speaks courteously is liked by all.
115. He who acts circumspectly achieves success.
116. He who has many friends lives happily.
117. He who is devoted to dharma attains life's goal.

Yaksha

118. Who rejoices?
119. What is most surprising?
120. What is the path?
121. What is the news?

Answer these four questions of mine and your dead relatives will return to life.

Yudhishtira

118. Oh dweller among the waters! He who cooks vegetables in his own house every five or six days, is free from debt and does not have to go out (to work), is happy.

119. Day after day people depart to the abode of death, yet those who remain never envisage their own death. What can be more surprising than this?

120. Logic is inconclusive; the scriptures are divergent; there is no sage whose opinion is final; the truth of dharma lies hidden; therefore the only way is to follow the path of the great.

121. In the cauldron of this illusory world time cooks beings with sun and moon and night and day as fire and fuel and with the months and seasons for ladle. This is the news.

The answer to question 120 recalls that to question 77: it is no use laying down that one path is right and others wrong; that on which one can find enlightened guidance is the one to follow.

Yaksha

122. You have rightly answered all my questions, Oh Conqueror of the Foe, but tell me now who is it that possesses all wealth?

Yudhishtira

122. As long as one's repute fills heaven and earth one is called a man. He to whom things pleasant and unpleasant, grief and joy, past and future are alike, he it is that possess all wealth.

This recalls the answer to question 84 and Sri Krishna's saying in the Gita: "Only men of right conduct, whose sins have come to an end, are free from the delusion of the polarities and worship me, steadfast in their vows." (VII.28)
The Breath of Nature

By Father Thomas Merton

When great Nature sighs, we hear the winds
Which noiseless in themselves,
Awaken voices from other beings,
Blowing on them. From every opening
Loud voices sound. Have you not heard
This rush of tones?

There stands the overhanging wood
On the steep mountain:
Old trees with holes and cracks
Like snouts, maws and ears,
Like beam-sockets, like goblets
Grooves in the wood, hollows full of water:
You hear mooing and roaring, whistling
Shouts of command, grumblings,
Deep drones, and flutes.
One call awakens another in dialogue.

Gentle winds sing timidly,
Strong ones blast on without restraint.
Then the wind dies down. The openings
Empty out their last sound.
Have you not observed how all then trembles and subsides?
Yu replied "I understand":
The music of the world sings through a thousand holes.
The music of man is made on flutes and instruments.
What makes the music of heaven?

Master Ki said:
Something is blowing on a thousand different holes.
Some power stands behind all this and makes the sound die down.
What is this power?
Saint Bernadette of Lourdes

By Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma

Lourdes, a town situated at the foot of the Pyrenees in southwestern France, has been very well-known for nearly a century and a half as an international pilgrim centre. Millions of people go to Lourdes in order to be relieved of various ailments. The waters of a perennial spring near the Massalie Grotto — where the Virgin Mary made her appearance — have wonderful healing power.

St. Bernadette was a unique personality; she was the recipient of the special favour of the Holy Virgin over and over (again).

It was the strange destiny of an innocent and poverty-stricken peasant girl from the French Pyrenees to become one of the greatest visionaries of Christendom. Bernadette Soubirous (1844-1879) was privileged to have actually seen the young and beautiful Virgin Mary on eighteen occasions. Among other things, Our Lady enjoined her to lead a life that is dedicated to prayer and penitence. Bernadette had to bear much suffering during her short life of thirty-five years. She shunned the crowds and joined a convent in 1866. This small and frail nun is remembered not only for her visions but also for her extreme simplicity and unshakeable faith.

On January 7th 1844 Bernadette was born in the Boly Mill which is in Lourdes. The eldest daughter of a miller called Francois Soubirous and her mother Louise Casterot, Bernadette was still an infant when her mother suffered burns. A candle set light to her bodice and the poor lady was scarred. Consequently, she could not feed her daughter. Therefore the child was sent to a young couple who lived at Bartres. (This couple had recently lost their first child). The other members of the Soubirous family were — a daughter Marie-Toinette and sons Justin and Jean-Marie. We know that as a little girl Bernadette regularly said her prayers. She knew the Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary and the credo. Until the age of ten her life was happy and carefree.

The mill that Francois managed was not faring well. It needed repairing but he was short of money; he was losing customers who found that his flour was coarse. As he could no longer pay the rent, Francois had to leave the mill. The father of Bernadette, interestingly enough, was a good Christian. The man had been over-generous. He ought to have saved up for a rainy day but that had been difficult. Often his family members went hungry.
They had to eat the coarse maize "bread of the poor". Sometimes Francois would stay in bed so that he would need less food! Now and again he did odd jobs like disposing of the waste from a local hospital. Occasionally Bernadette was given a small piece of white bread as she could not stomach the maize bread. If anyone snatched that food from her, Bernadette never complained about it.

At the age of eleven in 1855 Bernadette fell victim to the plague that broke out in Lourdes. Her sores were given treatment in the form of friction with rags of straw. She recovered as a result of this painful remedy, but she got asthma which was going to trouble her for the rest of her life. Soon this condition would be compounded by tuberculosis of the bones in her legs.

The damp climate of Lourdes was detrimental to the child’s health. She was not only an asthmatic but also rather weak. She suffered from sleeplessness. Bernadette needed special care but her parents were so poor that they had to struggle to survive.

As Bernadette had been having a severe asthmatic attack, she was staying with her former nurse at Bartres. There she worked as a shepherdess while learning the catechism for her first Holy communion. After living there for nearly six months, the fourteen-year old Bernadette returned to her new home. What a home! It was no other than the Cachot, the damp and dingy disused lock-up, which was far too small for her near-destitute family of six.

At the time of the apparitions in 1858 Lourdes was an insignificant little town in the French Pyrenees with a population of about four thousand.

To find out the full significance of the Virgin’s spiritual instructions it would be worthwhile to examine individually each of her 18 apparitions.

First Apparition
(February 11th, 1858)

On this cold and misty morning three young girls — Bernadette, Toinette and Jeanne Abadie (a school friend of Toinette) decided to go and search for firewood. For there was insufficient wood for heating the hearth. They made their way to the bank of the river Gave that faces the grotto. Bernadette had never been there before. Toinette and Jeanne waded through the icy water after seeing some bones and branches on the other side of the river. Bernadette was in the process of removing her stockings so that she could join the other two girls.

Bernadette has vividly described the sequence of events that happened thereafter.

Suddenly Bernadette heard the sounds of a storm. When she turned towards the meadow she noticed that the trees were not moving at all. But beside the grotto the branches and brambles were in a state of motion. Everything else was calm. Inside the highest opening in the grotto Bernadette saw a Lady in white. The Lady was very beautiful. Bernadette had never seen anyone like her before. The Lady bowed her head and greeted Bernadette and she also stretched out her arms. There was a rosary over her right arm. Bernadette was afraid and wished to tell the two girls
SAINT BERNADETTE OF LOURDES

St. Bernadette
about it but lacked the courage to do that. Believing that she was mistaken, Bernadette started rubbing her eyes. The Lady smiled and beckoned Bernadette to get closer to her but the latter was full of fear. With the intention of saying her prayers, Bernadette took out her rosary and knelt to make the sign of the cross but she found it impossible to raise her hand to her forehead. The Lady turned towards Bernadette and crossed herself in a gesture of prayer. Although Bernadette’s hand was trembling, she managed to make the sign of the cross this time and say her rosary — she was no longer frightened. In spite of the fact that the Lady was passing the beads through her fingers, her lips remained still. The Lady’s long white dress reached as far as her feet and only her toes could be seen; her dress was gathered at the neck from which a white cord was hanging. A white veil covered her head and it draped over her shoulders and arms. A yellow rose could be seen on each foot. Around her slender hips she wore a blue sash that fell below her knees. Light radiated from the Lady. After Bernadette had finished her rosary, the Lady bowed, smiled and quickly disappeared.

Toinette and Jeanne, who had collected firewood, tried to attract Bernadette’s attention. But she was kneeling in a prayerful posture. Then the two girls started pelting Bernadette with pebbles. One pebble hit Bernadette’s shoulder but she continued to remain motionless. Apparently she was in a trance.

After the apparition had disappeared, Bernadette waded through the water. She found unexpectedly that the water was warm instead of cold. Once home, her mother forbade Bernadette to return to the grotto. Profoundly impressed by the vision of this beautiful Lady, Bernadette often burst into tears.

The Second Apparition
(February 14th, 1858)

News of the extraordinary occurrence spread like wildfire. At school Bernadette was called a liar and she was even slapped.

Her mother reluctantly permitted Bernadette to go to the grotto. First of all Bernadette went to her parish church where she filled a tiny bottle with holy water. Along with her sister and a number of friends, she went to the grotto. They all knelt down and started saying the rosary.

"Have a look at that! It’s a bright light!” exclaimed Bernadette. “The Lady has a rosary on her arm and she’s looking at us!” she added. But, alas, the other girls failed to see anything. Bernadette stood up, threw some holy water in the direction of the Lady and said: “If you’re coming in the name of God, you may stay — if not, go away!” Hearing these words, the Lady gave her a smile and a bow. Bernadette’s words were seemingly audacious, but nevertheless it is a fact, as every student of the occult knows, that satanic beings are given to disguising themselves as holy persons. Bernadette was not wrong in suggesting that the Lady should, as it were, establish her credentials. The more water Bernadette sprinkled the more the Lady smiled and bowed! There was a look of ecstasy spread over Bernadette’s pale face and her eyes
were fixed on the Lady. Believing that she was dead, some of the schoolgirls shouted at Bernadette and shook her. But she was smiling and tears of joy were running down her cheeks. Her mother and another person arrived on the scene and took her back home.

Although some of the apparitions took place in the presence of a crowd, only Bernadette saw the Lady and heard her speak. There were no witnesses; there was none who could corroborate Bernadette’s version of what happened. We have to take her word for it for the following reasons. Bernadette was a person of complete integrity and therefore all her statements relating to the Lady and her messages do not have to be doubted. Such was her truthfulness that it would have been quite out of character to invent a very convincing story. Was Bernadette trying to be the cynosure of the eyes of the religious world in general and the Christian one in particular? We can rule out that possibility because Bernadette was a God-fearing and self-effacing soul who never sought her own personal glory.

The Third Apparition
(February 18th, 1858)

When Bernadette set out to the grotto she was accompanied by Madame Millet, a wealthy widow, and Mademoiselle Peyret who was carrying paper, pen and ink. They all knelt at the grotto and were getting ready to pray.

Immediately Bernadette exclaimed: “There she is!” Mlle Peyret requested Bernadette to ask the Lady what she wanted. Thereupon Bernadette took the pen and paper and went towards the Lady. But the Lady moved herself away. The Lady signalled that Bernadette was to stay and that the others were to go away.

“Lady,” said Bernadette politely, “would you kindly write down your name?”

“It’s unnecessary,” replied the Lady, who was speaking for the first time. Then in gentle voice the Lady said: “Would you do me the favour of coming here for fifteen days?”

Bernadette answered that she would like to come if her parents gave her permission. Before the Lady rose towards the roof and disappeared from sight, she remarked: “I don’t promise to make you happy in this world, but in the next.”

That prophecy was fulfilled in so far as all the years leading to Bernadette’s early demise were dogged by suffering and several agonising illnesses.

The Fourth Apparition
(February 19th, 1858)

At dawn Bernadette, her mother, her god-mother aunt and several others went to the grotto where they lit a candle. Bernadette knelt on the ground, made the sign of the cross and prayed. Then as she was saying her third Hail Mary, Bernadette became ecstatic. The state of ecstasy lasted for about fifteen minutes. A bystander reported that as soon as the Lady appeared, Bernadette’s smile became beautiful and her very countenance underwent a change. Her face radiated joy.

Some of those present believed that
Bernadette was in the process of dying. Her mother prayed: “Lord, I beg you, please don’t take my daughter from me!” On their way home Bernadette stated that the Lady had smiled in silence.

**The Fifth Apparition**  
(*February 20th, 1858*)

On this bitterly cold morning about thirty were at the grotto, waiting for Bernadette’s arrival. With a lighted candle in one hand and her rosary in the other, she started saying the rosary. The presence of the Lady enraptured Bernadette. Soon she was in a state of ecstasy. Bystanders observed how her face got transformed during her beatific vision.

Later Bernadette explained that the Lady had given her a special prayer. She was to say that prayer for the rest of her days. This prayer was never disclosed by Bernadette to the world although pressure was put on her to reveal it.

**The Sixth Apparition**  
(*February 21st, 1858*)

More than one hundred persons eagerly awaited the arrival of Bernadette at the grotto. But she preferred to be alone there. Once again the crowd witnessed her ecstasy and they were quite touched by that experience.

The Lady took her eyes off Bernadette for a moment and looked into the distance. Then she looked at Bernadette again as the latter had asked the Lady what was making her sad. On that occasion the Lady said:

“Pray to God for sinners.”

This advice could mean that one should pray to God for the conversion of sinners so that they become orientated towards God; it could also imply that prayer is a means of atoning for the sins of others.

Dr Dozous of Lourdes, who had wanted to expose Bernadette as a mere hysterical girl, examined Bernadette during her ecstasy and found that her pulse and respiration were normal. Convinced that he had been mistaken, the doctor resumed the practising of his religion.

Bernadette was required to present herself at the law court. The public prosecutor questioned her and asked her not to go to the grotto. “I’ve promised the Lady to be there,” she replied, refusing to obey him.

On the same day the Commissioner of Police Monsieur Jacomet questioned the girl and made notes. When these were read out to her, Bernadette blurted out: “You have added statements that I never said.” Her outspokenness infuriated him. He continued to talk angrily until he heard a commotion outside. People were shouting: “We will break your door unless you release her.” The man yielded to their demands and Bernadette was set free.

Although at various times Bernadette was subjected to interrogations of this kind, such trying experiences failed to shatter her self-confidence. She insisted that all her visions really happened. She was also quite certain of what the Virgin had told her. Persons in positions of power and influence would try to persuade Bernadette to change her account of certain important events at the grotto.
But it is a tribute to her individuality and strength of character, and above all, her honesty, that Bernadette always maintained very firmly that only her own version of these events is correct. When interpreting her personality, commentators often state that Bernadette had a stubborn disposition. Because of her uncompromising loyalty to truth, Bernadette seemed like a stubborn and headstrong individual.

**February 22nd, 1858**

The Commissioner of Police issued an order that two guards should follow Bernadette at a distance. Her parents forbade her to visit the grotto but Bernadette found it impossible to resist its magnetic appeal. Bernadette went there but the Lady did not appear! "What did I do," she said sadly, "to offend her?" Bernadette's confessor Abbe Pomain consoled her and stated: "None can forbid you to go to the grotto."

**The Seventh Apparition**  
(February 23rd, 1858)

Among those present at the grotto were some notables of Lourdes who also recited the rosary. Early in the morning Bernadette saw the apparition of the Lady and the girl's consequent ecstasy lasted for about an hour. The people closely watched every movement of Bernadette — nodding of her head, making the sign of the cross and smiling. They noticed how her face became transfigured with infinite joy when she was in communication with the Lady. After her ecstasy Bernadette was surrounded by people who wanted to know what the Lady had said.

On their way back home Bernadette informed her mother that the Lady had given her a secret. This was one of the three secrets told her during the apparitions. Bernadette always kept the secrets.

**The Eighth Apparition**  
(February 24th, 1858)

As she arrived at the grotto Bernadette found a multitude of people already there. Some were sceptical and even hostile but the majority were believers. After Bernadette had knelt, made the sign of the cross and lit a taper, it surprised onlookers that her face betrayed grief instead of ecstasy. Tears were rolling down the cheeks of the young shepherdess. Bernadette moved on her knees towards the grotto, talked with the Lady and returned to her place. Now the expression on the girl's face was sadder than before. Then she smiled and went to the cave's entrance on her knees. Next she knelt and kissed the ground. The vision was over.

When she was questioned about the reasons for her actions and tears that morning, Bernadette answered that the Lady had given her certain messages:

"Penance! Penance! Penance!"

"Pray to God for sinners!"

"Kiss the ground for sinners!"

Often at Lourdes I was disappointed because I hardly saw anyone doing penance for their sins, whereas at the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal I had noticed that many pilgrims were doing penance. On the vast esplanade near the Basilica at Fatima pilgrims form themselves into a line as they walk on their
knees towards the sanctuary. Some ardent devotees from different parts of Portugal and Spain, ignoring the physical discomfort occasioned by their *sadhana*, go to Fatima on foot rather than by public transport. Living solely on bread and water, they journey for days during their pilgrimage. This kind of penance entails suffering. In all fairness, it is not impossible that pilgrims do penance privately at Lourdes. Volunteers help the sick in various ways as a gesture of penance. Some serve out of sheer love. If penitentially inclined, the sick can suffer their misfortunes in an attitude of quiet and dignified resignation and regard themselves as doing penance for their sins of the past and present. Bearing one's sufferings without complaint is an essential element in penance. Bernadette bore her illnesses and sufferings and humiliations. Once Bernadette said: “Oh! My God, may your will be done! I accept all suffering since such is your will!”

When suffering, Bernadette was often heard to say: “Oh! My God, I love you!”

Our whole attitude to suffering must change. Why do we mistakenly view suffering as an undesirable affliction of the body or mind? Suffering can be seen as a blessing in disguise. At Lourdes we not only come face to face with a great deal of suffering but we also learn to resign ourselves to it. Instead of waging war against suffering we can try to accept what fate has decreed. Let us therefore gladly accept our suffering; it is our self-sacrifice and our supreme surrender to the Divine.

The instruction that one must pray for sinners is a clear vindication of the power of prayer. Through the instrumentality of prayer one can atone for the sins of others, helping their stagnant souls to progress from the depths of degradation to spiritual salvation. A person who intercedes for sinners and unbelievers with the Divine is neither indulging in wishful thinking nor wasting his time, for he is able, indirectly and subtly, to effect significant changes in their lives. Bernadette advised that we must love without measure and help others without counting the cost.

**The Ninth Apparition**  
(February 25th, 1858)

About 400 persons were present at the grotto but, as always, only Bernadette had a vision of the Lady.

In the course of this apparition Bernadette was required to drink at the spring and wash herself. The Lady pointed with her finger to a specific place where, after Bernadette had searched for it in the muddy ground, the miraculous spring could be found.

“She is mad!”, exclaimed the crowd when they saw Bernadette washing her face in muddy water. Such was their contempt for Bernadette that some jeered her.

**The Tenth Apparition**  
(February 27th, 1858)

The previous day the Lady had failed to appear. Disappointed and puzzled, Bernadette had remarked: “Am I in the wrong?”

The tenth apparition was long. As the
Lady’s conversation with the lass continued, there was a remarkable transformation in Bernadette’s appearance. When her youthful face was transfixed in ecstasy it was as though she had suddenly become an angelic being. People noticed that there was something other-worldly about her. Several times she drank at the spring and kissed the ground.

On their way home, Bernadette informed her aunt about what the Lady had instructed her to do: “Ask the priests to have a chapel built here.” Accordingly Bernadette went to meet Abbe Peyramale in order to convey the Lady’s request. Peyramale was already so unfavourably disposed to the apparitions that he had forbidden his assistant priests to visit the grotto.

Bernadette: “The Lady has ordered me to inform the priests that she wants a chapel built.”

Peyramale: “What’s her name?”

Bernadette: “I don’t know.”

Peyramale: “Haven’t you asked her?”

Bernadette: “When I ask, she simply smiles.”

Peyramale: “If she has a right to a chapel, I’m asking her to prove it by making the rose bush at the grotto bloom at once.”

The sceptical Peyramale was presenting a challenge and subtly questioning the genuineness of the widely discussed happenings at the grotto.

The Eleventh Apparition
(February 28th, 1858)

There were an estimated 2000 people at the grotto that morning. It was with considerable difficulty that Bernadette, carrying her candle, managed to break through the crowd.

During her ecstasy Bernadette recited
several decades of her rosary and moved on her knees, climbed towards the grotto and returned and frequently kissed the ground. Remembering Peyramale’s message, Bernadette not only asked the Lady her name but also wanted the Lady to perform a miracle by making the rose bush flower immediately. The Lady simply smiled.

**The Twelfth Apparition**  
*March 1st, 1858*

On the previous day the examining magistrate had warned Bernadette about the risk of imprisonment if she would go again to the grotto.

In spite of this warning, Bernadette, accompanied by her father, went to the grotto again which was now being visited by thousands who were regarding it as sacred. For the first time a priest was also present. The throngs of visitors prayed with Bernadette and kissed the ground and followed her example to the smallest detail.

A devout woman, who was bedridden with a serious illness, had given Bernadette her rosary and had asked the girl to use it during her ecstasy. Therefore Bernadette started holding high the woman’s rosary in the grotto. The Lady was displeased.

“Where,” asked the Lady, “are your own beads? Why not use them?” Thereupon in accordance with the Lady’s wishes, Bernadette was in the process of replacing the woman’s rosary with that of her own. Immediately the people started holding out their own rosaries in the direction of the grotto, mistakenly believing that the Lady was wanting to bless theirs!

**The Thirteenth Apparition**  
*March 2nd, 1858*

Once again Bernadette succeeded in getting to the grotto after fighting her way through a tremendous crowd. The youthful seer knelt, lit a candle, went to the mysterious spring and drank water, kissed the ground and moved about on her knees. Suddenly she was in communion with the Lady.

“Tell the clergy,” declared the Lady, “to come here in procession and build a chapel.” Bernadette at first was not keen on meeting Peyramale, the cure of Lourdes, as she had found him to be rather temperamental and contrarious. However, she dutifully met him twice.

Peyramale: “What’s the Lady’s name?”
Bernadette: “I do not know it.”
Peyramale: “Why not ask her?”

**The Fourteenth Apparition**  
*March 3rd, 1858*

Some 4000 people flocked to the grotto in the expectation of seeing Bernadette transfixed in ecstasy as she conversed with the Lady. She knelt in devotion and prayed but the vision did not appear.

“The apparitions are probably over,” remarked a member of the public.

“But the fifteen days aren’t over yet,” replied Bernadette tearfully. On Bernadette’s second visit later that day, the Lady appeared and explained to Bernadette that she had refused to
appear in the morning as some had dishonoured the grotto overnight.

Undaunted, Bernadette visited the cure once again.

Bernadette: "The Lady wants a chapel built."

Peyramale: "Have you the money for it?"

Bernadette: "No, Monsieur."

Peyramale: "Neither have I! Ask the Lady for some!"

The Fifteenth Apparition (March 4th, 1858)

Thousands, including many foreigners, poured into Lourdes as the apparitions at the grotto had got much media coverage. The city's entire police force together with soldiers were there to maintain law and order.

After attending mass at the parish church very early in the morning, Bernadette proceeded to the grotto with her father and several relatives. She was escorted by gendarmes who opened her way through the excited crowd but Bernadette remained calm and did not lose her composure.

The vision appeared and Bernadette was in ecstasy. Her exalted state lasted for more than an hour and during this period, as usual, she smiled repeatedly, nodded her head and made the sign of the cross. As she was leaving the scene, people applauded and kissed the girl. She returned to her gloomy dungeon-like home and resumed her life as a schoolgirl.

There was a stream of pilgrims to the grotto. They were regarding this cave as a particularly sacred shrine for prayer and penitence. Candles burned and hymns in honour of the Virgin were sung.

The Sixteenth Apparition (March 25th, 1858)

It is not clear why Bernadette did not go to the grotto for three weeks. Had Peyramale succeeded in dampening the girl's enthusiasm for the Lady? Did the sorrowful seer feel hurt, since the Lady had not divulged her name? Anyway, during her evening prayers at home on March 24th, Bernadette felt called to return to the grotto the following morning which, coincidentally, was March 25th — the day of the Feast of the Annunciation. On this special day it is customary for many Christians to celebrate the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin of the incarnation of Christ. Several persons were cherishing the hope that something wonderful would happen at the grotto on this festive occasion.

When Bernadette, carrying her candle, entered the grotto early in the morning, she noticed that it was shining with light and the Lady was already there awaiting her. The girl knelt and begged to be forgiven for being late. The Lady bowed her head towards her and indicated that there was no need to apologise. Bernadette said that she not only felt a deep affection for the Lady but also that she was particularly happy that the Lady was once again appearing before her. After reciting her rosary several times, Bernadette asked the Lady who she was but the Lady went on smiling. Her request was repeated. With a sad expres-
sion the Lady joined her hands and raised them above her breast; then while turning her eyes towards heaven she parted her hands, bent towards Bernadette and with a trembling voice said: “I am the Immaculate Conception” (Que soy era Immaculada Concepción in the local patois). These were the final words that the Virgin Mary addressed to Bernadette. Our Lady smiled and disappeared.

When Bernadette reported the happening to Peyramale he was overcome with emotion. Still he did not make a pronouncement about it until the Bishop of Tarbes had given his opinion.

It was quite an interesting coincidence that in 1854, just four years prior to the Virgin’s apparition at Lourdes, Pope Pius IX had defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, according to which the Blessed Virgin Mary, by a most singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, was preserved from all stain of original sin from the first instant of her conception.

Lest she should forget them, Bernadette was saying again and again the words “I am the Immaculate Conception”. Why did she have to repeat this line? Probably because she has heard it for the first time; alternatively, she was attempting to commit to memory something she had vaguely heard before (in church services?) but which had always remained to her an incomprehensible theological concept. One of Bernadette’s memories of the grotto that she evidently wanted to treasure was this parting declaration of the Virgin — “I am the Immaculate Conception.”

The Seventeenth Apparition

(April 7th, 1858)

A mass of people were already at the grotto when Bernadette went there very early in the morning. They loved the sight of the seer as she knelt and prayed. They particularly liked the beatific expression on her innocent face.

One of those present at the grotto was Dr Dozous, a physician from Lourdes, who wanted to witness Bernadette’s ecstasy “in the name of science”. He observed an event that was almost beyond comprehension. Bernadette was holding a very large candle which she had to place on the ground from time to time as it was rather heavy. With her rosary in her other hand she went on her knees to the entrance of the grotto. During her ecstasy, apparently unbeknown to her, the flame of the candle was licking the inside of her left hand for fifteen minutes. Alarmed, people screamed out a warning that the girl was burning herself. A gust of wind increased the flame but Bernadette felt no pain at all. After her ecstasy, Dr Dozous examined the condition of her hand. To his astonishment, there was no trace whatsoever of a burn. This extraordinary phenomenon has been termed the “miracle of the candle”.

Bernadette was preparing for her first Holy Communion and memorising her catechism. People were calling on her and requesting her to pray for invalids. The police were harassing Bernadette and subjecting her to long and tiring interviews. She was threatened with imprisonment if she assumed a role as healer or accepted money — Bernadette
denied these accusations. Peyramale, who had previously been unsympathetic to Bernadette, defended the girl by stating that she was not a danger to the public.

For a time the adversaries of Lourdes were triumphant. On June 10th it was officially declared that Lourdes was an illegal place of worship. The police and municipal authorities had the power to enforce a decree that forbade the taking of water from the spring. Access to the bank in front of the grotto was prohibited and a barricade was erected to prevent people from going there.

**The Eighteenth Apparition (July 16th, 1858)**

On this day the Lady appeared for the last time. It was the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and late that evening Bernadette felt impelled to visit the grotto. On account of the barricades Bernadette, her aunt and some women just managed to see the vault of the grotto, but the rest of it was not visible. No sooner had Bernadette said a few ‘Hail Mary’s than the smiling Lady was there. On that occasion Bernadette’s ecstasy lasted for fifteen minutes. “Never,” remarked Bernadette, “did I see the Lady looking more beautiful.”

Thrice the barricades were pulled down by the furious people of Lourdes. Such was their righteous indignation. Responding to the annoyance of the people, on October 5th Emperor Napoleon III commanded that pilgrims should have free access to the grotto. The dark forces were subjugated. That evening, wrote Peyramale, all Lourdes went to the grotto to drink water.

In her special role as spokeswoman for the Virgin, it must be said that Bernadette, despite the obstacles in her path, dutifully conveyed the messages of Our Lady by asking the priests to organise processions to the grotto, to have a chapel built and especially to do penance for sinners. Her mission was a success in so far as all these objectives saw the light of day.

Bernadette became famous and people went after her. They wanted not only to see her but also to touch her and to ask questions over and over again about her spiritual experiences. She needed privacy but that was difficult to find in a world in which she was increasingly viewed as a religious idol. She decided to become a nun. Given her devotional temperament and her Catholic background, it was a most natural decision. Various religious orders competed to have Bernadette, but she joined the Sisters of Charity of Nevers. Bernadette said: “I am going to Nevers because they did not lure me there”. So on July 4th 1866 at the age of twenty-two she left Lourdes and never returned.

It was quite a struggle for Bernadette to adjust herself to the rigorous disciplinary life of a nun under a superior. Perhaps she should have gone, not to a convent, but to some other isolated place where she could live in total solitude and spend all her time in prayer. Praying is what Bernadette liked most.

After her arrival at Nevers, Bernadette was directed to relate the whole story of Lourdes to the entire congregation providing that it was never again to be mentioned. As a nun she had to accept the challenge of beginning a new life that would entail regarding herself as a mere
nonentity. Never at Nevers must she rest on her laurels. Bernadette had once remarked that she was ashamed of her headstrong qualities. Sooner or later every religious seeker should realise the importance of surrendering one's will to the Supreme.

Sister Marie-Bernard was Bernadette's new name. Donning a religious habit, she became part of a community of 300 odd nuns.

Despite the fact that Bernadette went to Nevers with expectation of not being in the limelight, she still had to provide information to various inquirers relating to the apparitions.

At Nevers where she spent nearly thirteen years of her life, it was found that Bernadette had no particular talent. Therefore she was made the assistant infirmarian and later convent sacristan. Most of her time was devoted to looking after the sick, although her own health was fast deteriorating. Bernadette suffered from chronic asthma, chest pains, a massive tumour of the knee and bone decay (TB in her legs). Twice she was afflicted with pneumonia. As the inevitable end approached she had very little skin left on the lower part of her body and back. But she bore her sufferings with penitential patience.

The Mother General was evidently disappointed in Bernadette since she publicly stated that this nun was good for nothing. Previously at Lourdes Bernadette had already warned the Bishop of Nevers that she was in fact good for nothing. "I offer you the job of praying," replied the bishop on that occasion. She was only good at praying. That says a lot for her spirituality.

When in 1870 cannons were installed in the convent courtyard because a Prussian invasion seemed imminent, Bernadette wrote to her father: "God can be found in every place, even amidst the Prussians." Her outlook transcended national frontiers. After Prussia invaded France, the convent was used for treating the wounded. Bernadette was one of those who tended the injured despite her asthma and other disabilities.

By 1878 she was bed-ridden and on Easter Monday of that year Bernadette told a nun: "I have been ground in the mill like a grain of wheat. I would never have thought that one must suffer so much to die". "Her body," in the words of Bernard Jackson, "was one large sore, and to move even slightly was an excruciating agony."

Clutching a crucifix, Bernadette died quietly during an asthmatic attack on April 16th 1879 about three o'clock in the afternoon which, coincidentally, was the same hour when Jesus expired on the cross. Her short life of pain, penance and prayer came to an end. Before passing away Bernadette begged: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me a poor sinner, a poor sinner."

Thirty years after Bernadette's demise, her body was exhumed in 1909 as part of the process of canonization. Then it was discovered to be in a perfect state of preservation and there was no smell of putrefaction emanating from it. Years later, during the second and third exhumations in 1919 and 1925 respectively, it was still in the same well-preserved state. Her short life was mysterious, and long after her death we are still filled with its wonder.
Date of photograph not known.

Sitting (left to right): 1) Annamalai Swami, 2) Major Alan Chadwick, 3) Niranjanananda Swami, 4) Sri Bhagavan, 5) Seshu Iyer, 6) Sama Tatha.


Standing (top left to right): 1) unidentified, 2) Raja Iyer, 3) unidentified, 4) Ranga Swami, 5) Madhava Swami, 6) and 7) unidentified, 8) Subramania Swami, 9) unidentified.

From the album of Dr. G.H. Mees, loaned to the ashram by Sri Hamsanandan J.J. de Reede. Re-photography by V. Karthik/Ramana Labs.
Date of photograph not known.

Sitting, left to right: 1) Niranjanananda Swami, 2) Sri Bhagavan, 3) Dandapani, 4) Maddu Rao, 5) a Malaysian devotee.


From the album of Dr. G.H. Maas, donated to the ashram by Sri Hamsanandam J.J. de Reede. Re-photography by V. Karthik/Ramana Labs.
Tamil Manuscript of Sri Bhagavan

We reproduce here the manuscript of Ulladu Narpadu (Reality in Forty Verses), a Tamil work of Sri Bhagavan, in his own handwriting.

Clarification on manuscript of Sri Arunachalaksharamanamala:

Reference is invited to the explanatory remarks on the manuscript which appeared in the last issue (p. 159). These stand modified as follows:

We now have it on the authority of Sri K. Natesan, one of the oldest devotees now resident at the Ashram, that pages 1 to 3 are actually in his handwriting. It is also confirmed that the rest of manuscript — pages 4 to 9 — are in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan.
1. பொன்றுள் உறந்துவிப்து வண்டியிட்டு வோமனவியல்
  கொட்டுவி வண்டியிட்டு மாடுவி கொட்டுவி
  வண்டியிட்டு மாடுவி கொட்டுவி
  மாடுவியிட்டு வண்டியிட்டு
  வண்டியிட்டு மாடுவி கொட்டுவி

2. முன்னம் மிகைந்து ஏற்பது செய்
  முன்னம் மிகைந்து ஏற்பது
  மிகைந்து ஏற்பது
  ஏற்பது மிகைந்து

1. முன்னம் கொடுந்து கொடுந்து கொடுந்து
  கொடுந்து கொடுந்து கொடுந்து
  கொடுந்து
  கொடுந்து

2. புயலுள் வண்டியிட்டு வண்டியிட்டு வண்டியிட்டு
  வண்டியிட்டு வண்டியிட்டு
  வண்டியிட்டு
  வண்டியிட்டு
  வண்டியிட்டு
3. மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் திருத்த வாழ்க்கையை மூடித்து என்று மறுவித்து நான் விளக்கும் வன்னையின் மூலம் கருதுவதை அடைவதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கு பதில் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தர பார்ப்பதற்கு பதில் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கு பதில் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தர.

4. தூயமான பொழுதையான நிலையில் மூட்டிய தென்னதியின் கணுக்கு கட்டுமானம் மூடியவை தென்னதியின் கணுக்கு கட்டுமானம் மூடியவை தென்னதியின் கணுக்கு கட்டுமானம் மூடியவை தென்னதியின் கணுக்கு கட்டுமானம் மூடியவை தென்னதியின் கணுக்கு கட்டுமானம்

5. மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு

6. மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு

7. மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு மனிதந்தரத்திற்கும் பார்ப்பதற்கு
8. பெண்களிடம் பவளாயக்கு இணைக்குமை வரும்வரும் கலந்துபெறும் கருத்திலையும் விளக்கத்திலையும் கூறுமையாலால் வாழ்க்கையில் வாழும் பலவையும் காணேற்றிருக்கின்றன.

9. எனினும் உங்கள் என்றும் கருத்திலையால் விளக்கத்திலையால் குறுக்கும் குறுக்கும் கண்ணை ரண்டுவரும் கூறும் எனினும் கூறும்.

10. அப்பால் நீங்கள் மனிதினரும் குறுக்கும் நீங்களும் பாதுகாக்க காப்பதற்கு பாதுகாக்க காப்பதற்கு தமது பாதுகாக்க காப்பதற்கு.

11. அவர்களுக்கு குறிப்பிட்டு பாதுகாக்க காப்பதற்கு மற்றும் பாதுகாக்க காப்பதற்கு தமது பாதுகாக்க காப்பதற்கு மற்றும் பாதுகாக்க காப்பதற்கு.

12. அவர்களின் மற்றும் வேளாண்மையின் மற்றும் வேளாண்மையின் காண்டு காண்டு வேளாண்மையின் காண்டு வேளாண்மையின் காண்டு.
12. சிந்துவார் குறிப்பாட்டு நல்லே கருதுவது
என்றால், உம்பர்கள் கூற்றுக்கு - கூற்றுக்கு
குறித்துப் பார்வையில் குறிப்பிட்டு உம்பர்கள்
கூற்றுக்கு பயன்பாடு மற்றும் பயனிக்கவுள்ள
பட்டியலை பார்த்தல் முதலே.

14. இயல்பான என்னும் பல்லியலில் நடைக்கு வருமான்
செய்திகள் ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளவும் செய்திகளுக்கு
பல்லியலில் நடைக்கு ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளவும் முயற்சிக்கும்
இயல்பானது செய்திகளில் இருந்தால்.

15. விலங்கில் பால் விளங்கக்கும் நிலை
சங்கங்கள் மூலம் சிற்றிக்கு சிற்றிக்கும்
சங்கங்களுடன் சங்க நிலைப்படுத்துகிறது
சங்கங்களில் இருப்பினும் சங்கங்கள்

16. நூற்றாண்டு பல்கலையியல் ஒட்டறைகள்
உடலில் கூறுக்கு கூறுக்கு - கூறுக்கு
பல்கலையியல் சந்தையில் இருந்து இருந்தால்
யாத்துவம் பொருளை விட்டது.

17. இலங்கை கங்கை பாலங்கள் உள்ளூரிலிருந்து
சலாதல் கங்கை கங்கைக்கு - கங்கைக்கு
சலாதலிலிருந்து இருந்து இருந்தால்
சலாதலிலிருந்து புனிதமான வரலாறு.
18. காலவரால் பிறந்த விளையாட்டில் பெயர்வழங்கப் பெண்களைப் பார்வையைத் தொடர்பே நடந்த பொய்யையும் விளையாட்டுகளும் கூறிச் செய்யப்பட்டன. எனவே போற்றவைத் தொடரக் காலம்.

19. நிலையான வெளிச்சம் மேற்காணும் விளையாட்டுகளை நோக்கியும். விளையாட்டுகளின் நிடைவு பகுதியில் மேற்குறிப்பிட்டு கூறும் பொய்யையும் காலம்.

20. காலமும் உரிமையும் கூறும் சொல்லால் சாத்தியமாக கூறும் விளையாட்டிகளும் காலமும் முற்பாகப் பெற்று சொல்லும் விளையாட்டுகள் காலமும் வந்திருக்கும் சொல்லில்.

21. முன்னையை முன்னையை வந்துள்ள காலமும் பெருமையும் பெற்றுள்ள விளையாட்டின் நிற்கங்களில் மேலும் விளையாட்டின் என்றும் காலமும் வந்திருக்கும் சொல்லில்.

22. முன்னையை பெற்று விளையாட்டுகளை நோக்கியும் பார்வையை மேலும் புதுக்கை பார்வையை விளையாட்டுகளும் மேலும் புதுக்கை விளையாட்டுகளும்.
2. எந்துமே நோக்கமற்றது.

23. என்னுடைய இரு புதிய கருவிகள் என்றெனில் என்றுடைய வருகையை ஒவ்வொரு எழுந்தம் பெற்று அவையை கொண்டு அவைகளை முடிக்கவும் முடிக்கவும் என்று.

24. மனிதரால் வெளியேறியுள்ள நிலையில் குறிப்பிட்டு விளக்கம் செய்யும் உயர்ந்த கூட்டமாகவே கையாளும் கையாளும் என்று.

25. இப்பட்டி பெருமான் புராணம் மற்றும் புராணம் பெருமான் மற்றும் புராணம் பெருமான் மற்றும் புராணம் என்று முடிக்கவும் என்று.

26. பெருமான் உடல் விழாக்குகளில் என்று மற்றும் குறிப்பிட்டு என்று பெருமான் உடல் விழாக்குகளில் என்று பெருமான் உடல் விழாக்குகளில் என்று.

27. மனிதரால் வெளியேறி குறிப்பிட்டு என்று குறிப்பிட்டு என்று குறிப்பிட்டு என்று குறிப்பிட்டு என்று விளக்கம் செய்யும் என்று விளக்கம் செய்யும் என்று.
28. சுதையை பொதுகு விளக்குகிறது பிள்ளை.
வில்லும் பொருளானை என்னும்-அல்லாமல்லாத
சுதையை விளக்கும் விளக்கத்தில் என்னும் விளக்கத்தில்
மறுநிலையின் மூலம்.

29. மூழ்கல் வாய்ந்த வழிபாட்டை என்னும்
சுதையை விளக்கும் என்னும் - காரணத்தை
மறுநிலையின் விளக்கத்தில் என்னும்
மறுநிலையின் மூலம்.

30. சுதந்திர வழிபாட்டை என்னும்
சுதையை விளக்கும் விளக்கத்தில்
மறுநிலையின் மூலம் - காரணத்தை
சுதையை விளக்கும் விளக்கத்தில்
மறுநிலையின் மூலம்.

31. நீங்கள் பார்த்துயிர் தன்னை என்னும்
சுதையை பிள்ளைகள் விளக்கத்தில்-காரணத்தை
சுதையையை விளக்கும் விளக்கத்தில்
சுதையையை விளக்கும் விளக்கத்தில்.

32. ஆன்மையான வழிபாட்டை என்னும்
சுதையையை விளக்கும் விளக்கத்தில்
சுதையையை விளக்கும் விளக்கத்தில்
சுதையையை விளக்கும் விளக்கத்தில்.
33. சரண்மார் பாரியவுடன் விளக்கத்தில்

34. வணங்கு மெல்காண்டை பாரியவுடன்

35. சித்தர்ப் பாரியவுடன் சிகச்சத்தை விளக்கத்தில்

36. நுழைவால் என்மையனே வேணுவை என்மையனே

37. தாங்குத் தொண்டிலுள்ள குழுக்கு வேணுவை

38. வெள்ளைக்கொண்டு வைத்து வேணுவை
38. விளியல் கொள்ளி விளியல் விளியல் விளியல் விளியல் விளியல்

39. பாண்டிய பாண்டிய பாண்டிய பாண்டிய பாண்டிய

40. பொருட் பொருட் பொருட் பொருட் பொருட்

2. வாழியார் வாழியார்
How I Came to Bhagavan

By K. Natesan

I WAS born into a very orthodox Brahmin family on November 26, 1913 in the village of Mondakurathur, near Polur, North Arcot District. That was also the birthplace of the Maharshi's renowned devotee, Echammal, who was related to me on my mother's side. My father, Brahmasri Krishna Ganapati, was a great Vedic scholar who taught Krishna Yajur Veda for thirty years in the local Vedapatasala.

I had my first darshan of Bhagavan Maharshi at Skandashram in 1921 when I was eight years old. Sri Vasudeva Sastry, one of the earliest devotees of Bhagavan, took me to see him. He was then my Sanskrit teacher at the Patasala of the Arunachaleshwara Temple.

Later in 1923, when Bhagavan came down to the present ashram, I used to visit the ashram often and sit before him. At that time I was studying in the Municipal High School where Sri T.K. Sundaresha Iyer was a teacher. After completing high school in 1930, I waited for two years before joining an engineering college in Madras. During those two intervening years I was at the ashram almost daily, along with T.K. Sundaresha Iyer. I used to spend time there even at odd hours of the day or night.

In 1936, after earning a diploma in civil engineering in Madras, I worked for six months under Sri K.K. Nambiar. He was already a staunch devotee of Bhagavan and had the good fortune of being posted as the District Board Engineer in Tiruvannamalai itself. By Bhagavan's grace, I was almost constantly at the ashram between 1935 and 1945, though I was employed on and off in various places. I often quit jobs to come to Sri Ramanasramam and be near Maharshi. My attachment to Bhagavan was such that I could not remain employed continuously until, by Bhagavan's grace, Sri K.K. Nambiar, who was then the Chief Engineer of the Madras Corporation in 1945, got me employed by that Corporation. That ended the rolling-stone phase of my life; I retained this job until my retirement in January, 1969. Throughout all these years I would never miss an opportunity to come to Bhagavan's ashram.

Between 1935 and 1945 I left for holy places without informing anyone. Eventually I would end up at Ramanasramam. Once on my return Bhagavan asked me about the places I visited. I replied that I had been to Tiruttani, Tirupati, and Padaiveedu (Renukamba Kshetram). Then the Maharshi pointedly asked me what was in my mind at that time. I gave a spontaneous answer in the form of the following verse from Ramana Gita:
“Lord, not on Swamimalai, nor on Tiruttani Hill, nor on top of Venkatachala (Tirupati) do you now dwell. In reality you are in Arunachala!”

The Maharshi smiled.

On the occasion of my wedding on July 5, 1942, T.N. Venkataraman, who later on became the President of Sri Ramanasramam, came straight to Vellore from Karaikudi to attend the ceremony. The train passed through and stopped at the Tiruvannamalai station, but T.N.Venkataraman, along with his eight-year-old son, stayed on the train and came straight to the venue of the function. When Chinnaswamy heard about it he began to scold his son and criticized him for going to Vellore to attend the wedding. Bhagavan overheard this from the Old Hall and said, “Why is he shouting? Ambi (T.N.V.) has gone to attend his friend’s marriage. There is nothing wrong in this.”

After I got married I came to the ashram with my wife and did pranams to Bhagavan in the Old Hall. My wife, Jnanambal, was already deeply devoted to Bhagavan and had had his darshan even as a girl of eight.

That day, after leaving the Old Hall, my wife and I visited Major Chadwick in his cottage. I had known Chadwick since his arrival in the ashram in 1935. He congratulated us on our marriage and remarked about the appropriateness of the bride’s name, saying, “Jnana you wanted and Jnana you have gained.”

Major Chadwick was one of the very few souls who moved closely with Bhagavan. One day he requested me to show Sri Bhagavan a piece of paper on which he had written down a definition of Self-realization. Sri Bhagavan read it and appreciated it very much. Chadwick wrote: “Self-realization: it is the death while yet alive of that which lives after death.”

In the earlier days some people used to sleep in the Old Hall. Once I slept there near the southern door at the far side of the hall. I did not get up even after 5 a.m. Bhagavan came near me and touched me with his right toe saying, “Get up. Day has already broken.” Immediately I got up and had the darshan of Bhagavan. This is called Visvarupa-darshanam, the first darshan of the chosen deity in the morning.

There was Veda Parayana every evening at the hall in the presence of Bhagavan (in addition to the parayana in the morning). He would be mostly introverted at that time. After this — from 7 to 7:30 p.m. — recitations of the Maharshi’s works in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, and Malayalam would take place. Devotees like Ramaswamy Pillai, Kunjuswamy, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer and some others used to take part in it. In the earlier days I was also participating. During Tamil Parayanam I noticed Bhagavan appeared quite unconcerned with things around him, though he remained fully attentive to the recitation. He wouldn’t hesitate to correct our pronunciation of the verses, as he was particular about obeying all the rules of prosody. Once I recited incorrectly the last verse in Arunachala Pancharatnam and Bhagavan pointed it out to me, demonstrating how it should be pronounced. He was satis-
fied only when I repeated it to him correctly.

Once when I was in Madras, T.P. Ramachandra Iyer's father was writing a letter to the ashram. In the course of the letter he was citing a certain Sanskrit verse. Because he was not familiar with the Sanskrit alphabet he asked me to write it for him. I did so, and when the letter reached the ashram and Bhagavan saw the verse, he looked up and told the devotees in the hall, “Oh, now K. Natesan has gone to Madras.”

Bhagavan was so keen and alert that he could recognize even my Sanskrit handwriting. I felt blessed to be remembered by him, in this manner, even though I was away from the ashram.

Another time I was sitting before Bhagavan and Vaidyanatha Stapati was showing Bhagavan the sculpture he was making of him. The Stapati asked Bhagavan for his opinion as to whether it was a good likeness of him. Bhagavan said, “I can't say. Only Natesan knows.” Vaidyanatha Stapati looked at me and Bhagavan said, “Not that Natesan, the barber Natesan.” He considered the barber to be the best authority on the artistic likeness of his body.
After retirement from service I came back to the ashram to serve the devotees. The ashram President, Sri T.N. Venkataraman, being a close friend of mine since 1934, found me very useful to the new devotees since I could function both as a receptionist and instructor. The President had entrusted me with the accounts of the Mountain Path etc. I served in the office until 1987. I ceased to work in the office due to glaucoma and cataract. Again, by the grace of Sri Bhagavan, I was completely cured of my eye trouble and normal sight has been restored. Since I am aged, the ashram President has been kind enough to accommodate me as a resident devotee.

I realize that I do not have the power to describe in writing what the Maharshi is, or what he has done by living in our midst, or what he will be to future generations. Let all those who aspire for liberation and eternal happiness turn to him for guidance and grace, and then, I am sure, his unique mission to mankind will be known in the hearts of the seekers.

To try to introduce Sri Ramana Maharshi to the world at large is just like trying to introduce the sun to the solar system. Sri Maharshi is self-effulgent like the sun. The Masters who appeared on earth before the advent of Sri Maharshi have shown several paths to get a vision of God or gods. But the Maharshi, by his unique, direct method of Self-Enquiry ‘Who am I’ has shown that realization of the Self alone is God-realization. And it is he that shines forth as the Self. Today the whole world has come to realize the greatness of the Maharshi on account of his direct path to realize the Self.

Once the whole world was attracted to Gautama Buddha by his tremendous soul force and at another time the world was drawn by the pure, selfless life of Jesus Christ.

At present the life and teachings of the Maharshi have spread widely to all the corners of the world as the Supreme Light of Advaita Brahman. It is my belief that the Maharshi is now the Universal Master.

SONG ON ARUNACHALA
By Noona Osborne

Little grass on the mountain,
In the silent evening
I remember I remember,
You were large as the whole world,
You, you, you! Large as
The sky which is boundless, in
Importance, you were everything.
So what is important......?
What size or what love, what......?
But when the heart loves everything,
There is silence and eternity.
Time is boundless, and the moment
Is like a blade of grass. The blade
Of grass is all I saw, and I
Loved the nether beyond life,
Since All — I loved, - why-let it be
All the world, or a little
Blade of grass;
The Mystic Poetry of
Alfred Lord Tennyson

By Alan Jacobs

ALFRED Lord Tennyson (1809-92) was a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge and one of eight children. His father was a clergyman. In 1827 he met his great friend Arthur Henry Hallam whose early death in 1833 prompted Tennyson’s most important poem, the long philosophical elegiac *In Memoriam.*

In the 1840’s in an effort to re-establish in the English national consciousness the mythological roots of Christian chivalry he published the first poem of the Arthurian saga, the popular *Lady of Shallot.* He was to continue this great theme later in the epic *Idylls of the King.*

After the death of Wordsworth he became the Poet Laureate and later a friend and confidante of Queen Victoria. He was widely admired as a celebrated, eminent poet whose gifts were boundless.

It is however the mystical nature of Tennyson that is of the greatest interest to us. Tennyson was “at heart a mystic with a capacity for mystical experience” wrote his grandson and biographer Sir Charles Tennyson1.

Devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in their conversations with him have made references to the poetry of Lord Tennyson. We have it on the authority of A. Devaraja Mudaliar that the following interesting conversations took place on the 16th and 17th of June 1946:

16-6-46

Later in the day Prof.G.V. Subbaramayya said, “It is said that by repeating his own name a number of times Tennyson used to get into a state in which the world completely disappeared and he realised that it was all illusion”. And a discussion ensued as to where the quotation came from and whether we could find it.

1 *Six Tennyson essays*, 1954.
In continuation of yesterday's conversation about Tennyson, the relevant passage was found in a foot-note to the English translation of Upadesa Saram. It was not in a poem but in a letter to B.P. Blood. Bhagavan asked me to read it out, so I did: "... a kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself, silently, till all at once, as if it were, out of the intensity of consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being: and this is not a confused state but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life".

Bhagavan said: "That state is called abidance in the Self. It is described in a number of songs".

His capacity for mystic experience is well demonstrated in his very influential work The Ancient Sage. This poem appeared in 1885 in a volume called Tiresius dedicated to his friend, poet and brilliant contemporary, Robert Browning.

The philosophy of the poem is Tennyson's own but illustrates his interest in Eastern metaphysical thought. He was a great admirer of the Taoist sage Lao Tzu. He believed all religions to be essentially one and available to all good men.

In The Ancient Sage there is a remarkable passage on 'Diving into the Heart'. The poet commences with an injunction to dive into the Self. He points out the limitations of Knowledge. It shines only on the surface, the world of shadows. It has never dipped into the abyss or depth beneath the surface play. But if the unencumbered soul ascends, it sees the Nameless. If the Nameless withdraws its support, the world would collapse:

If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know;
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
But never yet hath dipt into the abyss,

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The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within
The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,
And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,
To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
Or even than the Nameless is to me.

And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven,
Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness
Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.

And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark
“How since — from when this earth began —
The Nameless never came
Among us, never spake with man,
And never named the Name” —

Tennyson recalls his experience when repeating his own name to himself, he passed into the Nameless and experienced the Reality:

I know not and I speak of what has been.
And more, my son! For more than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch’d my limbs, the limbs
Were strange not mine — and yet no shade of doubt,
But utter clearness, and thro’ loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match’d with ours
Were Sun to spark — unshadowable in words
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

In this section there is an injunction to strive and ascend through the range of night and shadow to the dawn of Vision:

And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence, if thou
Look higher, then — perchance — thou mayest — beyond
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow — see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision!
So, farewell.

The poem is remarkable for the number of Upanishadic ideas contained in its scope. This was one of his later poems.

In *The Mystic* the poet describes the mystical life. At first it is a world of varieties. It then becomes a visionary world. Fixed in his spiritual centre he surmounted the feelings of being a body and entered a world of white flame, pure, embracing all lives. This poem demonstrates his understanding and experience of the transcendental state:

Angels have talked with him, and showed him thrones:
Ye knew him not: he was not one of ye,
Ye scorned him with an undiscerning scorn:
Ye could not read the marvel in his eye,
The still serene abstraction: he hath felt
The vanities of after and before;
Albeit, his spirit and his secret heart
The stern experiences of converse lives,
The linked woes of many a fiery change
Had purified, and chastened, and made free.
Always there stood before him, night and day,
Of wayward varycoloured circumstance
The imperishable presences serene
Colossal, without form, or sense, or sound,
Dim shadows but unwaning presences
Fourfaced to four corners of the sky:
And yet again, three shadows, fronting one,
One forward, one respectant, three but one:
And yet again, again and evermore,
For the two first were not, but only seemed,
One shadow in the midst of a great light,
One reflex from eternity on time,
One mighty countenance of perfect calm,
Awful with most invariable eyes.
For him the silent congregated hours,
Daughters of time, divinely tall, beneath
Severe and youthful brows, with shining eyes
Smiling a godlike smile (the innocent light
Of earliest youth pierced through and through with all
Keen knowledges of low-embowed eld)
Upheld, and ever hold aloft the cloud
Which droops lowhung on either gate of life,
Both birth and death: he in the centre fixt,
Saw far on each side through the grated gates
Most pale and clear and lovely distances.
He often lying broad awake, and yet
Remaining from the body, and apart
In intellect and power and will, hath heard
Time flowing in the middle of the night,
And all things creeping to a day of doom.
How could ye know him? Ye were yet within
The narrower circle; he had wellnigh reached
The last, which with a region of white flame,
Pure without heat, into a larger air
Upburning, and an ether of black blue,
Investeth and ingirds all other lives.

These short extracts are only the briefest of introduction to a huge volume of work — an attempt to indicate Lord Alfred’s stature as an occasional mystic poet. He was a deeply religious man, whose inspirational flights often touched the high regions of Upanishadic insight and wisdom.

TO SLEEP

By William Wordsworth

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
I've thought of all by turns; and still I lie
Sleepless; and soon the small birds melodies
Must hear, first utter's from my orchard trees;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth:
So do not let me wear to night away:
Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?
Come, blessed barrier betwixt day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!
A Preface to the *Bhagavad Gita*

By Subramania Bharati

Subramania Bharati (1882-1921), outstanding Tamil poet and prose-writer, was well known for his fierce patriotism and zeal for social reform. His writing was not confined to these themes but extended to the field of religion as well. Bharatir (as he was popularly referred to) translated the *Bhagavad Gita* sometime in 1912 and wrote a preface to it as well. We present here a translation of his preface by K.S. Sundaram ('Adavan').

The following *sloka* is the whole basis of Lord Krishna’s teachings in the *Gita*:

One who is established in *buddhi* becomes, here and now, free from both good and evil. Hence, follow the path of Yoga. Yoga is efficient performance of one’s work.¹

Being fixed in *buddhi* means keeping the mind pure and unsullied. *Buddhi* is clarity of mind, freedom from anxieties and the sinful thoughts which give birth to these anxieties, when the mind is in its right, natural state. Jesus too meant the same mental state when he said: “Unless ye become as children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” Being like children doesn’t mean forgetting all one’s adult experiences, or forgetting all that one has learned from books. It doesn’t mean becoming a suckling again. It merely means that one’s heart should be as pure as that of a child.

The mind cannot become pure unless the heart is pure. Lord Krishna says: “Retain the mind in its pure state. When this is done, all your deeds become good deeds. You can do whatever you want, forgetting distinctions of good and evil; your actions will always result in something good, for your mind is pure now. One whose mind is pure can never do evil.”

Now, instead of interpreting the sloka thus, it would be sheer folly to assume that Lord Krishna told Arjuna to re-

¹ *Gita*. 11.50.

Source: *Subramania Bharati, Chosen Poems and Prose*, Pub: Sub Committee for Publications on behalf of the All India Subramania Bharati Centenary Celebrations Committee (1982), sponsored by the Govt. of India.
nounce all action, good and evil, and go to sleep. For, later, Krishna says, "No one can be in a state of non-action even for a moment. All living beings, involuntarily and according to the laws of nature, are chained for ever to the performance of different acts."  

So, work we must, there is no respite from work for anyone. Even Kumbhakarna did not sleep for ever; he was awake six months in a year. But while attending to your work, do not be weighed down for ever by attendant problems or obstacles, do not let these dishearten you. Lord Krishna says: "O Arjuna! You have only the right to action; you have no right over the fruits of your action." So the Lord says: "He who performs his tasks in a detached manner is not worried about the result; he is the true sannyasi, the true yogi." Never lose purity of mind, and work unceasingly. Whatever you do, then it will be for good. Even when you are sitting quietly, your mind will be doing good on its own. 'Work' does not mean bodily work alone. Mental work too is work. Is not meditation work? Is not reading work? Is not reflection work? The sastras, poems, plays, laws, the Vedas, the puranas, stories, the kavyas, they are all works, are they not? And they are all creations of the mind, not the body. Keep the mind pure.

Further on, Krishna says: "Perform Yoga. Yoga is attaining Perfection in all actions."

Making oneself worthy of one's allotted work is yoga. Yoga is samatwa or equality in being: Samatvam yoga uchyate. That is, immersing your mind completely in the thing before you, without confusion, without weariness, without fear, the mind becoming one with that which is before it. When you relate to a thing, your mind should assume entirely the shape of that thing. Only then can you know that thing fully. The Lord says, "Do your tasks as a yogin": Yogasthah Kuru Karmani.

A yogi can expand his mind and make it like that of God Himself. For he understands clearly how to concentrate attention. So his mind shines with a divine largeness; it has no limits. And he is able to see God everywhere.

The Gita elucidates what is already contained in the Vedas. Purusha Suktan in Rig Veda says: "All this is God." This same idea is expressed by Krishna in the Gita when he says: "He who sees atman in all things, and all things in atman, he truly sees."

You too are God; all your actions are actions of God. Your being born in bondage is also an act of God. Your binding yourself with more and more fetters is also an act of God. Your attaining mukti is also an act of God.

'If all actions be God's actions, why then should I make an effort to shake off my bonds? Why should I strive for mukti?' — if someone were to ask this question, then we, in turn, would ask him: 'What is mukti?'

Mukti is freedom from all sorrows, fears and worries. If you want to achieve that state, make the requisite efforts for it. If not, go on wallowing for ever in misery. Who stops you? But always keep in mind that none of your actions is

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9 Gita, III.5.
really yours. They are all God's. This knowledge will do you good, according to the sastras. Sarvam Vishnu mayam jagat says Sanatana Dharma. The universe is all made up of God. All appearances, all shapes, all forms, all scenes, all beauties, all situations, all life, all objects, all forces, all events, all action — everything is God (hence equal to one another). Isavasyopanishad says, 'Whatever occurs in this universe is pervaded by the Divine Being': Isavasyam idam sarvam yatkincha jagatyaam jagat.

Krishna expresses the same idea in the Gita when he says: 'The God which permeates the whole world is eternal.' Hence when God permeates everywhere, when all actions are God's actions, is it not sheer ignorance to nurse worries, fears, sorrows?

If everything is the doing of Siva, why should I worry? 'Is Siva dead, who, on my forehead wrote my fate?'

The stars revolve because of God's power. His wheel governs the three worlds. You are He. Your mind, the thoughts in your mind, everything is He. Sarvam Vishnu mayam jagat. So, O Man, why do you keep carrying responsibilities? Put them down and be doing whatever you can do. Why do you bother? Did you create the world? And when you think of the world, do not count it as something separate from you. The world, which includes you, which created you and is nurturing you — did you create this world? Are you in charge of it? Do the stars obey you? Were you born out of your own will? Why, then, do you feel responsible for each and everything?

God says: 'Many who, free from greed, fear and anger, purified through the penance of jnana, are pervaded by me and take refuge in me, have attained my state of Being.' This sloka indicates how one can attain mukti here on this earth, how one can become like God. 'Follow the path of jnana', Krishna says. 'Make it a discipline, a penance. Banish fear. Banish desire. Take refuge in me, merge in me. You will then gain my nature!'

Again, Krishna says: 'He who, surrendering all actions to God, acts without attachment, is never touched by sin — as the lotus leaf by water.'

Isn't this excellent news for you, O men? God has shown you here the way to avoid sin. If thinking all the time of God you do action with the clear conviction that it is done by Him and on His behalf, then no sin ever attaches itself to your mind; it rolls off, like drops of water rolling off a lotus leaf.

The Lord says:

'Man has no actions of his own, nor has he any godgiven ability for action. Nor has he access to the fruits of his action. Everything occurs according to the laws of nature'.

Hence let him suffer from no confusion or envy in whatever he does. Let him not be in conflict with other lives, thinking that they are obstructing his actions.

'A brahmin of learning and culture, a
cow, an elephant, a dog, and a chandala — all are equal in the eyes of a sage,' says Krishna. 

Hence, Krishna says that a jnani not only rises above differences of caste and intellect, but sees no differences at all between the various forms of life.

Are not all beings pervaded by God? Is it not Vishnu who fills all forms of life? Sarvam idam Brahma. The snake is Narayana; the mongoose too is Narayana. The brahmin is an embodiment of God, and so is the pariah. This being so, to consider any one form of life as inferior to any other form betrays ignorance. Those who nurse such feelings of inferiority and superiority will never at any time be free from sorrow. Wherever such feelings of difference exist, there is fear, danger, death. Freedom from all such differences is jnana. That is the pathway to mukti.

There are many who regard the Bhagavad Gita as a mere dharma sastra. That is, they think its aim is to make a man perform his work well. But this is not a correct view. It is mainly a moksha sastra. Its primary purpose is to show man the way to freedom from all suffering. Work is inescapable, yet many argued that doing work was an obstacle in the path of moksha. It is with a view to enlightening these people that Krishna in the Gita — in Chapter III in particular and in all the chapters in general — teaches again and again, 'do work; do work; do not abandon work; do work;' From this, many people concluded that it was a treatise on 'work'.

What is important here is not the stress on doing work, but in what manner, with what mental attitude, it should be done.

Do your work without attachment; be detached, detached, detached; this is the paramount lesson. Work is after all something you have got to do in any case. Hence, the main aim of Gita is not to repeat it again and again. Don't get involved in the fetters of work, don't get into difficulties because of these, don't get bound by these, — this is the important message. Free yourself of all attachment, do not let fatigue, worries, tension, fear and, worst of all, doubt, take hold of you. "He who doubts perishes", says Krishna.

'The gates of the hell which destroys the soul are of three kinds: kama, krodha and lobha'. Of these, worries and fear have to be got rid of completely. The Gita teaches this repeatedly in about a hundred slokas. The means for this is faith in God. Unless one triumphantly installs God in one's heart, the heart would for ever be gnawed by worries and fears, it would for ever be tormented by anger and desire. And these will certainly destroy man.

We should hold firmly in our heart the faith expressed by Nammalwar in Tiruvaymozhi when he says: 'Glory, glory, glory. Gone is the curse of existence; gone is hell; Death has nothing to do here now; kali will fall, you shall see.' Bhakti is the way to this. Bhakti is the strong belief that 'God will never forsake us'.

"Not for the world, O heart of mine,
But for your good I say—no lie, this;
Have faith that God who governs all
will guard us.

Say this and end all sorrow.”

This assurance Krishna gives:

Listen. I shall tell you again the greatest of all secrets, my ultimate word.
Since you are dear to me, I tell you for your good.

Make your mind mine. Be my bhakta (devotee). Serve me. worship me. You shall then attain my Being. This is true; I give you my word. You are dear to me.

Renounce all dharmas and take refuge at my feet. I will free you from all sin; grieve not.7

As a man fallen into a river lifts up both his hands, so too must all who are struggling in this sea of samsara lift up both their hands (that is, renounce all responsibility, realising that everything is God’s responsibility) and surrender at God’s feet — so taught Sri Ramanujacharya.

This same truth is taught in the story of Prahlada and in Draupadi’s disrobing episode in the Mahabharata. Only after Draupadi raised from her waist her left hand too — which had been holding on to her dress — and lifted up both hands together above her head — only then, through the grace of Krishna, did her apparel start growing endlessly, her modesty was safeguarded and Dussasana fell down exhausted...

Appar8 too describes the nature of this supreme bhakti when he says, “Even when I am tied to a pillar of stone and thrown into the sea, my sole sufficient help is the mantra of Namah Sivaya.”

Now, if happiness and sorrow are to be regarded as one, then why have faith in God? Why expect Him to dispel our fears and protect us?

Since the Gita says that whatever happens, good or bad, life or death, is an act of God and all such happenings are to be considered equal, why do we need God’s help?

If someone were to tie us to a stone pillar and throw us into the sea, then — some people may well argue — ‘Would not the appropriate thing to do according to the Gita be to consider this an act of God, drown and die? Why should we call out Namah Sivaya, Namah Sivaya and try to protect ourselves?’ This is a fallacious argument. I shall explain how. If we accept equally the good and evil accruing to us as a result of past karma, avoid fickleness of mind and trust in God, then Hesubjects us to some hard trials. If we do not lose heart even then and retain our faith in God, then God Himself comes and dwells within us. Thereafter we encounter no suffering. No danger comes near us. No death comes near. All doubts, worries and sorrows leave us of their own accord. We attain life divine here on this earth, and experience eternal joy — nityananda.

Moreover, when Krishna says that a jnani considers all things equal, it does

7 Gita. XVIII.64-66.
8 Saivite poet-saint, also called Tirunavukkarasar.
not mean that he — the jnani — should disregard all norms of human life and become a madcap.

Slaying a child and performing worship of Siva — both acts are the same in the eyes of God, for He is embodied in all movements, all actions. Even so, Krishna does not deny that according to human law killing a child is sinful and performing Siva puja is a meritorious act. Man wants to be rid of all misery and enjoy bliss eternal. Gita shows the means. We should bear all suffering with courage and devotion to God. At the same time, we should never knowingly cause suffering or loss to others. We should always be doing good to the world. We should cherish every human life as we do our own. Even after we have renounced all worldly desires and are immersed in eternal bliss, we should be still engaged in doing good deeds so as to set an example to others. This is what Krishna teaches in the Gita.

Further, the teaching that good and evil should be regarded as equal merely means that when misery overwhelms us, even then we should bear it calmly; it doesn't mean that one should reach an inert state like a clod and see no difference between making love and suffering from tuberculosis. For, as long as one retains common sense it is impossible not to differentiate between the two. It is wrong to assume that when one attains atma jnana, one loses common sense. When an ordinary man is struck by tuberculosis, he may lose heart, imagine the disease to be mighty and himself puny, may fall more and more into the clutches of the disease, label himself as a tuberculosis victim and prepare to die. But a jnani will never do so.

The fire of jnana reduces to ashes all actions: jnanagni sarva karmani bhasmasat kurute. One should have an abiding faith in God. God is all around us as the world. He is also ourselves. He would cause us no suffering, internally or externally. Why? Because we have surrendered ourselves to Him within and without. Not an atom stirs without Him. He will do us no harm. He is incapable of doing any harm. Why? Because we have reposed our full faith in Him. 'Those with faith in God will never be forsaken.' This is bhakti. What is the nature of this God? He is the embodiment of all awareness, all movement, all being, all forms. He abides as everything. What then should those with faith in Him do? Never feel sorrow, never know worry, never doubt.

The Lord says:

O son of Kunti! Contacts with nature give rise to cold, heat, pleasure, pain; they come and go and are impermanent; bear them patiently, O Bharata.

That man of courage who is unaffected by pleasure or pain, who regards them as equal — he attains the state of immortality. 9

This is the pinnacle of the Gita. Life immortal — living on this earth like Markandeya; this is the essence of the Gita. Immortality: this is the secret of the Vedas. It is because they show this path that the Vedas are held in such reverence.

9 Gita. II.14-15.
God says in the above two slokas that it is possible to attain such a state in this world. He also explains how. Experiences in nature which give rise to cold and heat, pleasure and pain, are by God's grace transitory, impermanent. Hence isn't it folly to melt at heart or suffer heartbreaks over these? Hence let no one grieve on account of these. He who has thus learnt not to grieve is fit to achieve immortality. This is Sri Krishna's creed. This is the essence of his teaching, this is the message of the Gita. Hence, the Bhagavad Gita is amrita sastra: that is, the sastra which teaches the path to immortality. Yet there are some who imagine it to be an exhortation to kill. Since all these eighteen chapters were spoken by Krishna merely for inducing Arjuna to fight and kill Duryodhana and others, some say that the Gita is a work whose sole aim is "inducement to kill". These people do not pause to consider why the Gita should talk so much about Vedanta, about satva Gunas, about banishing sorrow, or about immortality if its sole aim was to order killing.

Duryodhana and others are but kama, krodha (lust, anger) and so on; Arjuna is jivatma; Krishna is paramatma; those who do not grasp this secret can never understand the Gita.

This work came to be written mainly for the benefit of kshatriya kings. No doubt, the Gita enunciates pathways to freedom which are universally applicable. Yet, this work belongs especially to the kshatriya kings and was widely read by them; just as the Vedas, though common to the whole world, yet belong especially to the brahmins.

Further, the Gita was narrated by a king; and the listener too was a king.

Hence, in order that the kshatriya kings may find it interesting, it opens with a battlefield prologue, in a dramatic manner. This structure accords it as high a place among great poems, as among jnana sastras. But those who, on this account, deny its value altogether as a jnana sastra have obviously not proceeded beyond the prologue.

"Why only in the introduction? Even inside, every now and then, the refrain 'tasmat yudhyasva Bharata' ('Hence fight, Bharata!') keeps recurring", some may object. This is the reason why I explained above the basic secret of the Gita. I shall repeat it again. Duryodhana and others represent desire, anger, inertia, ignorance, forgetfulness, worry, sorrow, doubt and other sinful thoughts. Arjuna is jivatma. Sri Krishna is paramatma.

If you ask me how I learnt this secret, let me tell you.

Arjuna says to Krishna:

You are Vayu; you are Yama; Agni; Varuna; the Moon; you are the father of all and the great great grandfather.

Krishna says:

Again, O mighty-armed, listen to my supreme word. You are dear to me and I tell you this for your highest good.

I am the great Lord of all the worlds. I have no birth; no beginning; he who

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10 Gita. XI.39.
knows me thus is, among mortals, undeluded and free from all sins.

Hence, both persons in the Gita — the speaker and the listener — stress that Sri Krishna is paramatma.

Once Sri Krishna is seen as paramatma, then it is easy for anyone who is trained in the sastras and is familiar with kavyas to infer that Arjuna is jivatma and Duryodhana and others are kama, krodha and so on. Only the ignorant will interpret the Gita’s teaching to mean the slaying of Duryodhana and other persons. These people forget that the Gita ranks among the three authoritative treasures of Hindu dharma, the other two being Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras. Neither are they aware that the founders of our three most famous philosophical schools — Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva — have all written commentaries on the Gita and established it as one of the foundation stones of Hindu dharma. Where is Sankaracharya, a “Bhagavatpada”? Where is killing? Can the twain ever meet?

The main aim of the Gita is to show the way to attain the empire of moksha, here on this earth, and so remain steeped in incomparable bliss. Hence it is karma sastra; it is bhakti sastra; it is yoga sastra; jnana sastra; it is moksha sastra; it is amaratva sastra (the sastra of immortality).

For one who wishes thus to attain moksha, the chief enemy — the sole enemy — is one’s own mind. ‘He who has no control over himself is his own enemy’, says God.

One has no greater friend than oneself, and one has no greater enemy than oneself. When one is one’s own friend, the whole world becomes one’s friend. Conversely, when one has no control over oneself and is one’s own enemy, the whole world becomes one’s enemy. The real enemy is within, not outside, oneself. It is the enemy within that appears as the enemy without. If one removes the inner foe, the outer foe will disappear of his own accord. All that exists without is to be worshipped as God. Only the enemy within — ajnana or the feeling of difference — is to be destroyed. When we shed our feelings of separateness, of difference, and realise that all actions that take place around us are God’s actions and all appearances are manifestations of God, then fear is destroyed.

In reply to Hiranya’s question, “Where is this God called Hari?”, Prahlada replied that “He is in the pillar, He is in the grass, He is everywhere.”

“Isn’t it absurd that one’s own mind should become one’s enemy? If everything is God, then is not my mind too God? Why regard it an enemy?” The answer is: When one conquers oneself, and does good to oneself, one’s mind is Divine and worthy of reverence; at other times it is one’s enemy.

If all is God, isn’t the mind engaged in evil also God? Would not the general principle that all actions are God’s actions apply here? Well, the principle is
being cannot be a true devotee of God. Anyone who hates another living being is not fit to be called a true lover of God. Those who eat meat are not true servants of God. Even those who kill bugs and lice are really torturing God.

Non-violence is one of the fundamental tenets of Hindu dharma: ahimsa paramo dharmah. The bhakti of one who fails to fulfill the vow of non-violence would not take him to immortality. God will not forgive one who takes another’s life. Nature will avenge defeat by death.

One should live in accordance with the laws of nature. No harm will come to us then. Hence common sense, as the English would put it, is the supreme wisdom, parama jnana.

The way of common sense is the easiest path. Being common, this wisdom is available to everyone. Yet, people fight shy of following common sense. Kama, krodha and the like prevent people from following the path of common sense. The clear doctrine of common sense is, ‘Love others so that they might love you.’ Love begets love. Affection begets affection.

It is but natural to wish that others should love you more than you love them. This tendency should be changed at once. This would lead to death.

We should love all other living beings. This would enhance life. That is, the life force within us would grow strong; if we expect others to shower affection on us while at the same time causing harm to others through thought and deed, that is, if we keep disliking others and cursing others, — we would doubtless be destroyed.

There are some others who regard the Bhagavad Gita as a treatise on sannyasa or renunciation. That is, they think it is intended for those who have renounced their wife and children, shaved their head and roam about as mendicants. There can be no greater misunderstanding. Neither the speaker of the Gita nor the one who listened to it was a sannyasi. Both were kings, both were family men. ‘How can you say so now? Did you not say earlier that Arjuna was jivatma and Krishna was paramatma?’ — You may ask. Well. Let it pass.

Paramatma and jivatma, too, are caught up in worldly affairs. Rabindranath Tagore, in a song addressed to God, says: “O Master, you yourself are caught up in family ties; how foolish of me, then, to seek deliverance from this?” Samsara — involvement in the world — is God’s involvement. All actions are Siva’s actions. ‘Not an atom moves without Him’, says the old Tamil adage.

Krishna says, “O Arjuna! There is no work for me to do in all the three worlds; there is nothing unattained and that might be attained. Still I continue to do work.”

Because, says God, “if I remained still without doing work, all beings on earth would follow my example. That would be the end of this world, and I would become the cause of this. Hence to prevent it I am working all the time.”

God is performing work ceaselessly. He keeps creating universes, preserving them, destroying them. Can a lazy God

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13 Gita. III:22.
14 Gita. III:23.
do all this? God is the best of karma yogis. He has ordained ceaseless work for the jivatma too; he has ordained home and children, kinsmen and neighbours. Simply because someone forsakes the company of men and retires to the forest he doesn’t get rid of his living environment. In the forest he is surrounded by countless animals, birds, reptiles, and trees, plants, creepers. He who imagines that dealing with animals would be less troublesome and would demand less care than dealing with human beings, is making a mistake. Howsoever bad human beings may be, howsoever foolish, yet it is surely better to live among them than with tigers, bears, wolves and jackals. It is true that there may be men in this world who make life difficult for us and justify the saying, “It is better to live in the forest where fierce tigers roam, than in the land ruled by a tyrant.” But we should not take this as a general rule; it is, rather, an exception which proves the rule.

Hence, merely by renouncing one’s family and children one doesn’t qualify for mukti. This is what Sri Krishna teaches in the Gita. He who does so violates the laws of nature. He who forsakes society does so because he lacks strength. He who forsakes his family forsakes God.

Tayumanavar, the saint poet, regarded Pattinathar as the greatest among ascetics. And what does Pattinathar say?

‘Greater than one who creates sastras is he who renounces his family and greater than he a million time is one who has achieved renunciation in the mind...’

Pattinathar said this as he was a sannyasi. I say: achieving of renunciation in the mind is right and proper, abandoning one’s home is a great sin.

What is papa (sin)? What is punya (virtue)? That act which causes harm to oneself or to others is sinful; that act which gives joy to oneself or to others is meritorious.

There is no act which can cause greater harm to one than renouncing one’s home.

“With a wife at home, there is nothing that one lacks.” Leading with her a life of dharma, is like enjoying heaven on earth. One’s home is one’s best dwelling place; not some mountain. One who is unable to see God in one’s own house cannot discover Him in some cave near a mountain top.

Where is God? He is everywhere. He is not present on the mountain alone, He is present in your home, too.

Tayumanavar sang:

Suka, whose limbs embodied you, called out.
From every side you answered,
Yes, here. Yes, here.

The sage Suka, eager to see God face to face, ran through the forest in ecstasy shouting, “God, O God!” Then, everything around — mountain, spring, cloud, river, canal, tree, plants, creeper, leaf, flower, bird, animal — answered, “Yes, here, here I am.”

God is omnipresent. This story illustrates the Vedic doctrine Sarvam idam Brahma — the whole world is God.
Tayumanavar says in one of his songs that both *sannyasa* and family life are equally good as paths for attaining *moksha*.

Under the mistaken notion that merely by leaving one’s wife and children one renounces the world, some roam from place to place, having no shelter or companions, subsisting on alms. The life that these people lead is miserable.

Vasishta, Vamadeva and the other sages of the Vedic period were all married and lived happily with their wives and children. With a view to attaining control over the senses, the *rishis* did observe celibacy, undergo long periods of penance. But, after a while they always came back into the family fold. The stories about *rishis* as contained in the *Mahabharata* and the other *Puranas* invariably confirm this view.

The *yagnas* were sacrificial ceremonies wherein cows, horses and goats were sacrificed. Then, Buddha arrived on the scene. He and the kings who became followers of Buddhism looked down upon ritualist Hindus who were adherents of animal sacrifices, and Hinduism fell into disrepute. Then came Sankaracharya. Incorporating some of the tenets of Buddhism into Hinduism, he rejuvenated and re-established the Hindu religion. On account of this some of his detractors called him *Prachchanna Bouddha* or crypto-Buddhist. But most Hindus hailed him as an avatar of Siva come to revitalize the Hindu *dharma*.

There is only one gain to us from Buddhism. It was Buddhism which confirmed, expanded and developed the practice of idol worship already prevalent amongst the Hindus. Inspired by the excellent statues of men made by the Buddhists, the Hindus, on the same pattern, created similar statues for their gods. Erecting statues for gods and offering worship to these is one of the important pathways to *mukti*. But one must offer worship with real *Bhakti*.

Now, the great harm done by Buddhism was reviving the later cult of *maya*. In the Upanishads and Vedas, the word ‘*maya*’ denoted Parasakti, the Supreme Power. But in the intermediary period many argued that ‘*maya*’ meant illusion. Hence followed arguments that the world was false; Devas were false; air, fire, earth, water and sky were false; the five senses were false; the mind was false.

The *Bhagavad Gita* was written to destroy the false *Vedanta* of these people. The basis of the *Gita* is the genuine *Vedanta* which says: ‘The universe is pervaded by God.’ *Maya* is not falsehood. Falsehood never manifests. But *maya* changes; change is the law of nature. *Maya* is God’s divine body. Evil is here in order to be overcome and destroyed. Good is to be accomplished and attained. You can attain *yoga* through surrender to God, through unceasing, unchanging *bhakti*. Consider all living beings as equal, then you will attain freedom. Through *satya-vrata* (fidelity to truth) you will attain bliss. Through purity in household life you will attain godhead.

This is the great truth which *Gita* teaches.
Pere Laval: Champion of the Poor

By Gladys O’ Rorke

TO JACQUES LAVAL, Mayor of Croth (in the diocese of Evreux in Normandy, France) and Suzanne his wife, were given a son, Jacques Desire, on the 18th September 1803. The Laval couple were deeply religious, sheltering ten to fifteen paupers at a time in their family home. This noble-hearted woman died when Jacques was eight years old. She left ten orphans, the eldest of whom was barely thirteen years old.

From having been a sunny-natured child, Jacques became reflective and quiet after his mother’s death. He carried this profound sadness with him for another thirty years; then, just as the sunshine pierces the clouds, his happy nature reasserted itself.

When Jacques was eleven years old, he was entrusted to the care of his uncle, Abbe Laval, parish priest of Tourville-La-Campagne. When Jacques’s father wanted him to take a studious career, Abbe Laval counselled against this course, fearing that the child’s timid and retiring nature would suffer from the harshness of College life. An alternative decision was taken, and Jacques was sent to the Seminary at Evreux. It proved to be a disaster. The thin youth of fifteen became even more introspective, withdrawing into himself and conceiving a dislike for study. Never robust, his health became even more fragile. Within him the silent grieving for his mother intensified.

Irritated, his father brought him home where he put him to work in the fields. It was hard going, and Jacques’s eldest sister was often at his side to lend a helping hand, ever ready to encourage him. A second attempt at the Seminary proved negative, so Jacques was packed off to the Stanislas College in Paris. There, the youth suddenly blossomed, evincing a keen interest in his studies and enjoying his first successful results, to the relief of his father and uncle.

In 1826, he was awarded the Diploma of Bachelor of Science. He decided on a medical career. After four years of study, he presented his thesis entitled An Essay on Articular Rheumatism. Intending to practise as an Intern at a Hospital, Jacques was prevented from doing so by the arrival of the ‘carabins’ who sought him out to discharge his military duties. Eluding them, he walked all the way to
Normandy, arriving there totally exhausted.

In September 1830, Doctor Laval took up a post at Saint Andre, near Evreux, where he was already known, both to the rich and the poor. The latter lost no time in flocking to him; for not only did he not charge them a fee, but saw that they received hot food, bread, and wine.

It was not long before the Pharmacist in the town and the doctor already established there, declared war on the new arrival who was far too popular for their liking. They made life so difficult for the young doctor that he moved to Ivry-La-Bataille. As the doctor there was on the point of going into retirement, things augured well for young Doctor Laval who was known to the townspeople, having relatives living there.

The young doctor dressed in the height of fashion, well-cut trousers, jacket with silk lapels, a cravate round the neck, and a top hat of the latest Chateaubriand style on his head. He danced well, was a good horseman, owned a smart coach and horses. To all appearances, he was a very successful young man.

Some things, however, did not change. The poor were not charged a fee, with the result that the doctor worked until his eyes closed with fatigue. He paid no heed to acquiring wealth, had no desire to marry.

Within him, inner voices made themselves heard: "You are mad! You work too hard! You must change your ways... find a more solid foundation so that you can truly help your fellow creatures". He began to pay more and more attention to these inner counsels, with the result that his lifestyle changed. The dandy disappeared. Former Cordon Bleu meals were replaced by simple fare. The carafes of wine were seen no more. Water became his drink.

People began to talk: "A pious doctor? This was not possible, surely?"

One day the doctor was returning home when his horse fell into a ditch and was killed instantly. Its rider was pinned beneath him. The shock of this accident turned the young man’s thoughts inward, forcing him to focus on his inner state. It resulted in his entering the Seminary of Saint Sulpice at the age of thirtytwo. Here, he subjected himself to severe austerities. Once, in the heart of winter, he saw a shivering mendicant by the roadside. With gentle hands he placed his coat about the man’s shoulders, and went his way. When at home for the holidays, Jacques slept on a straw pallet, enfolding himself in his doctor's cape. He spent long hours on his knees in prayer, leaving bloody tracks on the cold floor tiles. He was received into the Priesthood on the 2nd December 1838.

Two months later he was sent as Cure to the village of Pinterville, where the villagers were lax in the practice of their religion. Undaunted, Pere Laval armed himself with the indomitable weapon of prayer and rose every morning at four to pray for this flock. At first his parishioners paid no heed to the silvery song of the bells as they heralded the celebra-
tion of Holy Mass, but it was not long before they began referring to their Cure as that ‘saintly man.’ Pere Laval busied himself in his small Church, sweeping, dusting, scrubbing the floors, painting inside and outside walls. He gathered wild flowers from the fields, arranged them in vases, and spread them in artful fashion upon the pure white linen he had placed upon the altar. Silver candlesticks gleamed, polished like mirrors, the tall candles cast a soft radiant light upon the place of worship. Clad in his priestly vestments, Pere Laval stood at the Church door, awaiting his flock, a smile of welcome on his lips.

The village school had no teacher, so Pere Laval took upon himself this work, gathering around him about twelve pupils. Many youngsters worked at the factory of Louviers from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. For these, Pere Laval held night classes where religious instruction was given. It was not long before the poor from outlying districts converged on Pinterville where the Cure fed them in his kitchen, delighted to see them. “I am with the best friends of Our Lord,” he would say, watching his visitors eat. Pere Laval visited the sick, remaining on his knees in their presence all the while. Once, when the river Eure was in flood, he knelt on his horse’s back to save those in the water. Again and again, he went back to pull someone to safety. He gave shelter to numerous families rendered homeless by the disaster.

A few months later Pere Laval was told that he was being sent to the Island of Mauritius. He discovered that from the end of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Lazaristes had been the first missionaries at Ile de France, and the Island of Bourbon (known today as Ile de la Reunion). Five hundred French families had come to Ile de France from Bourbon and they had been suitably housed in Port Loui. Slaves from Moçambique, Madagascar, and other places, had been brought to the island to work in the fields. Scant regard was paid to erecting places of worship. When eventually a Church was built in 1764, only the whites were allowed to worship therein. Slaves were allowed only to be baptized or married within the precincts. By 1770, only three Churches had been built on the entire island. There were only five priests in all. When the Lazaristes returned to France, they were replaced by priests who were lax in their duties. Things went from bad to worse. Children were not even baptised.

In 1810, England took over Ile de France and it became known as Mauritius. Ten years later Pius VII sent a Benedictine, Monsignor Slatten to Mauritius. He was succeeded by Monsignor Morriss in 1831. Four priests and a Bishop were expected to cater to the spiritual needs of 80,000 souls. It was a difficult situation. On the 15th September 1841, Pere Laval stepped on to Mauritian soil. The heat hit him like a solid fist. The gentle breeze floating in from the Indian Ocean’s azure waters did little to cool the air. Everywhere, enslaved lolling about, listless in the heat, avid eyes fixed on the new arrivals, hopeful hands held out in timeless begging gesture. Pere Laval did not need long to realize that the priests who had been
sent out to help, had sadly neglected their duties. In a letter to Pere Liberman, he wrote: "The priests up till now have not troubled themselves with these poor people, in fact, they have treated them as though they were animals — and yet, there is much good that can be done for them. If we had done for them what we did for the Whites, our work would have been efficient ... the priests have given unimaginable scandal ... and here is the wound. The deep wound of this poor island of Mauritius. Few marry — they go from one relationship to another with ease...they abandon themselves to drunkenness...the young women are de­bauched by their masters and white youth — those born here, and called Creoles are corrupt. I am working with some poor malgaches (blacks) and several Mocambicans". Although about half of the blacks on the island had been baptised, in Pere Laval's eyes, they lived the lives of pagans.

Although Slavery had been abolished in 1839, for most of the ex-slaves, freedom meant having nothing to do, that is starving to death. They found field work repellent, associating it with the Overseer's whip and his dogs. Many of the Blacks brought to the island on slaveships could not even speak one word of Creole. To survive, there remained only begging or brigandry. But now, for the very first time, the Blacks of Mauritius could claim a priest for their very own; one who actually cared about their welfare, who spoke of loving them! Could this be truly possible? It was true! It was possible! Pere Laval began his mission in Mauritius as he had done in Pinterville.

He went down on his knees and prayed. He lived close to the Presbytery in a two­roomed hut. There, he slept in his trunk, which led to the belief that he took his rest in a coffin! At 3.30 a.m he was up, celebrating Holy Mass an hour later. His first meal of the day was at noon, which consisted only of rice. The evening meal was bread and eggs.

Pere Laval continued to undergo severe austerities. He became very thin, causing his superiors much concern. The priest learnt to speak Creole in order to be more accessible to the Blacks. Within six months he was proficient in this 'pretty language' as he called it. Wherever he went, Pere Laval rubbed shoulders with the extremely poor, especially among the Blacks. In contrast to the 'golden lives' of the Whites, seated under their large parasols on the beaches and sipping iced drinks brought to them by their servants, the squalor, filth and suffering of the poor touched the priest's heart, wound­ing him deeply. He spent long hours watching malaria ravage young and old alike, as the plague caused sweating, shiv­ering and high temperatures. Blackwater fever struck with fierce hand at unex­pected moments. Pot-bellied children stood in doorways, their huge eyes filled with suffering, whilst sorrowful mothers clutched at them. Men lolled about in the shade, many in drunken stupors, others, with lack­lustre eyes, stared at the priest in their midst in his black soutane. Pere Laval wept for these neglected chil­dren of the Church.

One day Pere Laval declared from the pulpit that he would celebrate a special Mass only for his black parishioners at
noon every Sunday. This announcement caused a sensation in Port Louis. The Whites burst out laughing. The Blacks could not believe their ears. Effortlessly, the Pere won their hearts. For the first time in their lives they were being treated with kindness, with consideration — as though they were people! There was no arrogance, only a sincere cordiality, which sprung form a humble, pure heart. They stared unbelieving as Pere Laval touched them on the arm, tapped a shoulder, made the Sign of the Cross on a forehead, handed out clothes, food, sweets. Their whole lives became lit up like a beacon. The Blacks would have done anything for this extraordinary man.

At noon the heat in Mauritius was truly terrific. It was that hour in the Tropics when the Hibiscus closes her petals, the smallest breeze does not stir leaf or blossom. The air is suffocating, the Sun, blinding. When the Whites went to Church at Port Louis, capital of the island, the Blacks were relegated to the back, separated by the balustrade which they were forbidden to touch. It was this noon hour which Pere Laval chose, to celebrate his special Mass. So great was the heat that the Whites would not attend, so their sensibilities remained intact, and the Blacks could occupy all the rows in Church. One day the ‘separation’ balustrade disappeared and was never seen again. After some time had elapsed converts increased. One day, Pere Laval declared form the pulpit: ‘Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, are not for us, my children — those are for the Whites. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays — those are for us, my children’. At these
instruction. He continued this work for twenty years. It was a gruelling task, as many of his pupils did not know their right hand from their left. With infinite patience, the priest would take their hand in his and show them how to make the Sign of the Cross. He spoke to them of the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the sanctity of the seven Sacraments. Pere Laval was averse to rushing his flock’s spiritual education. He painstakingly reviewed their behaviour. In a letter dated 15th October 1844, he told his Superiors: “After three years of work... 250 people have been baptised, 350 bound in wedlock. 320 First Communicants are there. There are few young people among these, mostly elderly folk. I am very strict about baptising and marrying, particularly so in regard to First Holy Communion. It is their conduct I observe, rather than relying on the level of spiritual instruction received. One must do all one can to ensure perseverance rather than baptise willy nilly. It is better to have 400 good Christians rather than admit First communicants at too rapid a pace. These good people have great faith in their poor Pere — they do nothing regarding the temporal or spiritual matters without first consulting me. They then obey my instructions”. Pere Laval disliked ostentation. When his pupils were ready he would say simply: ‘My children, on such a day... we are going to make our First Holy Communion’. Without any fanfare, those chosen came forward to kneel at the Communion Rails, and the gentle Pere who placed the Sacred Host upon their tongues was the happiest of them all.

When he had spent four years on the Island, Pere Laval was sent to Ile de Bourbon (Reunion) by his Superiors, for a well-earned rest, as his health was causing concern. The tired priest welcomed the respite.

He wrote: “My poor soul was athirst for Silence... the solitude, this retreat, will restore my body and soul, so that I can take up my task with renewed courage. God’s good work goes at a very slow pace in Mauritius due to lack of workers in the field... I have not much to show for my four years there. Nevertheless this little core has fermented within the mass. There is truly a great aspiration towards religion. Every day the Creoles, Malgaches, Mocambicans, come, craving for spiritual instruction. Yet, I am all alone in Port Louis. Apart from this, my dear Pere, there is such poverty! From afar, Missionary work appears to be a holy undertaking — but from near at hand there is much adversity, much which is repulsive, much toil, many setbacks. Nevertheless, due to Our Lord’s mercy, I have not yet experienced discouragement. At night one is exhausted, utterly depleted, crushed — but, when morning comes, one sings:

Forward, with a good heart
Towards the Work.
One must toil and suffer.

My dear Pere Superior, we have need of prayers, us poor missionaries, exposed as we are night and day, to adversity. O holy Silence, in which one serves so well, so devotedly, the Divine”.

Pere Laval’s rest was short. Soon, he returned to Mauritius, anxious to rejoin
One night, Pere Laval saw a man standing at the back of the Church with a stout rope about his waist. His attitude bespoke: “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The priest took him in hand. “Emilien,” he told the man, “follow God and follow me.” From that moment, Emilien was the Pere’s shadow, proving especially useful in his ministry with the poor in the Valley of the Priests, where, since the days of slavery, these unfortunate were classified as semi-primitives. Pere Laval addressed them thus: “If you fear me, here is Emilien who will speak in my place”. Obediently, Emilien gave them spiritual instruction. Even after the death of Pere Laval, the faithful Emilien continued this all important work. Other lay workers came forward to help the priest.

Soon, this unique evangelization of Blacks by Blacks spread, and a grand conversion took place all over the Island. Chapels began to appear, rising in spontaneous response to the need of the people. By October 1847, Pere Laval wrote that a dozen chapels had been built around Port Louis — made of wood and ‘rather lovely’. Birds settled on the rafters sending out their musical accompaniments from their high perches. A few months later, twenty chapels greeted the swelling ranks of Churchgoers.

But now, calamity struck the islanders. In March 1854, cholera killed some prisoners. By the end of May, more than six hundred had died, to be followed by a further four hundred in the space of a week. Panic gripped the populace. There was a frantic exodus from the Capital as residents fled to outlying districts. Long columns of pall-bearers were seen in cemeteries as the death toll mounted. Pere Laval kept his superiors in touch with the situation. He said, “We are in the midst of an epidemic. We have administered to seventy stricken; there were nearly two hundred in the town, of these, most are dead. It is not possible to help all...I have tried to organize Nursing Groups per quartier. Charitable souls have offered us transport. I hope that Our Good Lord and His Holy Mother will sustain us in this superhuman task. May the Divine Will be done!” The epidemic lasted three months, during which Pere Laval worked incessantly, organizing his Groups, hearing Confessions, tending the sick, administering the last rites to the dying, comforting the bereaved, supervising meals for the indigent, celebrating Holy Mass, giving spiritual instruction, beside his other duties such as baptising and performing marriages. The grim statistics unfolded. In Port Louis alone, there were more than thirty deaths daily. The old people and orphans were taken to Montagne Longue, where families adopted them.

Then, suddenly, it was over. The cholera left as swiftly as it had arrived. Pere Le Vavasseur was sent from Bourbon to help Pere Laval. Eager and brimming over with enthusiasm, Pere Le Vavasseur decided it would be a good idea to have a splendid procession of First Communicants holding tall candles, accompanied by hymn singing. He organized this fine occasion, complete with banners and
flowers. A forest of lit candles, Black girls in white mousseline dresses, smart young boys in white suits, banners proudly displayed. Voices raised in sacred song. The Whites were scandalised! Such attention and ceremony for Blacks! There were vociferous protests. Angry scenes developed. The police came to restore calm. Pere Le Vavasseur beat a hasty retreat back to Bourbon, leaving Pere Laval to handle his flock in his own quiet way. Pere Laval expressed his thoughts on Missionary work in this way: "A Missionary must not proceed as a Logician would, or a grand worldly orator. He must have acquired over his flock an ascendancy due to the example of his detachment, his holiness — then, his word will be seen to be sincere. He must explain purely and simply the Holy Truths as did the apostles of old. To inspire confidence it is necessary to lead a virtuous and charitable life". He further wrote: "Before ascending the pulpit I ask God to speak through my mouth, then, when the Divine fills me, I empty my heart into those of my children."

Poverty, like the gaunt spectre of Death, was ever present. In the Capital alone, there were 20,000 Black inhabitants who had been unable to make the transition from slavery. They lived in abject poverty and unimaginable squallor. Pere Laval confronted this problem head on. He organized some of his flock into Groups. Their task was to bring those in direst need to the Priest's attention. To these, Pere Laval handed alms from his 'Treasure for the Poor,' collections from weddings, offerings, etc. The Groups met once a month to render account of the distribution of Funds. The sick were given medical care, their Pharmacy bills paid. Pere Laval visited the sick regularly. He said: "Those who care for the sick do a splendid work. Those who preach are often exposed to the temptations of pride and vanity. Those who visit the sick, who care for them, especially if the sick are poor, do God's work for those who have been forgotten and abandoned."

The holy priest did not forget the prisoners. In his worn soutane, wearing an old hat, and carrying his parasol, Pere Laval was a familiar sight as he entered the prison to care for his 'poor children' behind bars. People would stop to stare at the frail priest seated in the cart of infamy, beside the condemned prisoners on the way to their execution. He encouraged and sustained them to the last, remaining close to the scaffold where he could be present until the final moments. There were those who spat on the priest's soutane as he walked through the streets of Port Louis. To these, Pere Laval raised his hat, smiling gently as insults were hurled at him.

Pere Laval at fifty six years of age, was worn out by his austere and arduous life. One day, whilst in the Confessional, he saw blood on his handkerchief. "It is a sign that I must prepare for my death," he said, "appoplexy is not far behind." Yet it took eight years before the illness overtook him completely. By then he was semi-retired. Whenever he fell asleep at the back of the Church, he would say: "How good it is to rest at the feet of Our Lord! This peaceful repose is good for body and soul." People flocked to his
side to warm themselves in his spiritual radiance. This caused him to pray, "My God, these good souls consider me to be a Saint — yet, I am the most miserable of all miserable sinners!" Pere Laval suffered a heart attack in 1861. He was bedridden for a time. His visitors found him invariably in good humour, even in gay mood. Surprisingly, his health improved enough for him to preach at the Blessings of the Church of Sainte Croix where crowds flocked to hear him.

He became very ill on the night of the 8th September 1864. He was given Extreme Unction. In a soft voice Pere Laval said: "What happiness to have been in the midst of the poor of Our Lord. What a good idea I had to work with the Poor. I bless the good Lord. I thank Him." Then, he wept. When the Sacred Host was brought to him Pere Laval tried to kneel. He was dissuaded from doing so. Afterwards, he told his brethren, "I declare to you all that if I am confident to appear before God, it is because I have loved the poor — because I have worked for the poor. I hope that because of those whom I have saved through the aid of Divine Grace, God will have mercy on me, despite my many sins." At 1.30 p.m. on the 9th September 1864, Pere Laval opened his eyes, gazed heavenwards, and said: "Jesus, Mary." A sigh. It was over. Forty thousand people attended Pere Laval’s funeral.

But, even after his death, the good Pastor continued to care for his Flock. He had told Caroline Prosper, one of his first converts, that her desire to be a nun would be fulfilled. Yet she was stricken, first by typhoid, then by a malady named

HAVE MERCY

By Dag Hammarskjold

Have mercy
Upon us
Have mercy
Upon our efforts,
That we
Before Thee,
In love and in faith,
Righteousness and humility,
May follow Thee,
With self-denial, steadfastness
and courage,
And meet Thee
In the silence.

Give us
A pure heart
That we may see Thee,
A humble heart
That we may hear Thee,
A heart of love
That we may serve Thee,
A heart of faith
That we may live Thee,

Thou
Whom I do not know
But Whose I am.

Thou
Whom I do not comprehend
But Who hast dedicated me
To my fate.
Thou —

From Markings, his private diary.
the ‘mal du Pott’, finally by paralysis. She
had been bedridden seven years when Pere
Laval died. The night following his demise, Cari
oline was awakened by a voice which said: “Have
someone take you to my body, and you will be
cured.” Her relatives when summoned and told
of this event, advised Caroline to go back to
sleep. Once again the voice made itself heard.
This time, Caroline saw Pere Laval part the
curtains around her bed. Despite the doctor’s
protestations Caroline insisted on being brought to
Pere Laval’s body which lay in the Chapel. Upon
kissing his hand Caroline found that she could
walk. The crowds shouted their joy at this
miracle. Upon reaching her home, Caroline sat
down to her first solid meal in months. A few
months later she entered the Convent, just as
Pere Laval had promised.

Another cure occurred soon after when
Pere Guilmin, who had suffered grievous
stomach pain for four years, and who could barely eat
anything, asked to be brought to Pere Laval’s tomb.
“If Pere does not cure me,” he declared, “then,
there is no hope.” The night following his visit to the
tomb, Pere Guilmin fell into a torpor, from which he
awoke the next morning, cured. Twelve years later,
in Paris, Pere Guilmin testified to this
miraculous cure.

An Asian by the name of Boodhun, suffered
from hydrophsia. The thought came to him to ask
Pere Laval to heal him. One night he dreamt that
the priest appeared to him, placed a scapular about
his neck, and cured him. When he awoke, his
malady had left him. Monsieur Beabois suffered from
terrible ulcers on his neck which caused him intense
pain. Puss oozed from his eyes and nose. He
had perforce to wind a cloth about
his neck day and night. The doctors had declared they could do nothing for him.
Two friends brought the unfortunate man to Pere Laval’s tomb. He uncovered his
wound. After a while, the sufferer thought he heard a step behind him.
Instinctively, he put up a hand to cover his wound. To his astonishment he felt
dryness. Further surprise when he found he could turn his neck. “I am cured,” he
cried out to his companions. It was true. The terrible wound had healed
completely. Many other cures followed.

Monsignor Hankinson spoke these words after Pere Laval’s death: “The
Church has her Apostles — one name suffices to prove this — a name both
venerable and unforgettable — one you will transmit to your children with love
and gratitude, like that of a friend, a father, a saint — Pere Laval.” Once, Pere
Laval said: “Peace and unity — these are the treasures of a Community. They
must be bought at any price.” Today, these jewels belong to the Island of
Mauritius. They also sparkle on Hindu Temples, Mosques, Cathedrals and Chi
inese Pagodas. Peoples of diverse faiths, races, customs, live in harmony side by
side.

At the tomb of Pere Laval, people come to pray, asking for his guidance,
healing, and paternal protection. They know their prayers will still be heard, for
the spirit of this humble, gentle Shep
herd is ever present.
**Was Christ An Avatar?**

By H. Sebastian Gubbins

I HAVE just been reading a book which declares that Christ was not what the Hindus mean by 'Avatar' but something much more. There is no need to give the title of the book or the name of the author, because it is by no means alone in its declaration. Many Christian writers have said the same. This, of course, raises the question what the Hindus do mean by 'Avatar'. The explanation given was so vague and perfunctory that it prompted me to turn to the *Bhagavad Gita* and see what Krishna himself meant by it. Reading that, I began to wonder whether the author of the book I mentioned had ever read it himself and what he meant by 'something much more'. Here are some of the statements of what it means:

"Supporting this whole universe with a fragment of Myself, I remain as I am." (X, 42)

"I am the Self dwelling in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all beings." (X, 20)

"Knowing Me to be the Source of all and all to emanate from Me, the wise worship Me with understanding." (X, 8)

"No action is incumbent on Me in the three worlds, nor is there anything unattained for Me to attain, yet do I act... If I ever ceased from action, these worlds would fall in ruin." (III, 22-24)

"Though I am the Unborn and Deathless Self, though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, resorting to My Nature, I take birth through My own Power." (IV, 6)

"Whenever righteousness decays and wrong prevails I incarnate. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil and for the establishment of right, I take birth from age to age." (IV, 7-8)

"In whatever way men approach Me, in that way do I come to them. All the paths men follow lead to Me." (IV, 11)

"I shall not be lost to him who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, nor will he be lost to Me." (VI, 30)

"Out of thousands, perhaps one strives for perfection; out of thousands who strive, perhaps one knows Me as I am. I am the origin of the whole universe and also its dissolution. There is nothing higher than Me. All this is strung on Me like beads on a string." (VII, 7)

I had thought of going systematically through the *Gita* and picking out such declarations, but is there any need? Is this not enough to make the "something much more" sound like a vulgar bazaar cry of "My religion is better that your religion"?
We Are Such Stuff
As Dreams Are Made On

By J. I. van Mukt

I WISH to share with you a strange experience that occurred to me during a phase in my journey when I seemed to be on a plateau without progress.

I must have had ancient links with India. I had been attracted to Vivekananda since my childhood. I took to Ramana Maharshi like a calf to its mother. I found in him a friend. He didn’t try to mould me by throwing tradition or my past onto my face. Instead he welcomed me with a smile that set me at ease. His words finding their echo within me, vested me with an authority beyond externals in my Quest.

Still I seemed to have committed an error in understanding his advice to me, that the waking world of my experience was just another dream. I didn’t reason this out properly using my experience of dream. I made wrong inferences: the dream experience showed me that I, the individual in the waking world had created the entire dream world and that I had experienced that as if I were awake. So too, I reasoned (wrongly) that I, the same individual, was creating the experience of this waking world.

Crawling through Bhagavan’s works in the original made me proficient in Tamil. I came across a verse in Advaita Unmai an ancient Vedantic poem by Kumara Deva Swami whose works were often quoted by Bhagavan. It said:

A person who realises a dream to be a dream, when asked by another, “In the dream, who are you?”, would reply, “Why of course, myself so-and-so”, (referring to the awakened ‘I’). So too a person who realises the waking to be mind-born, when asked by another, “Who are you in the waking?” would reply, “Why of course, myself”, (referring to the impartite Brahman).

I had trouble with this verse, and none could clarify it for me. The simile did not appear to be right as its two parts

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1 Advaita Unmai v.14:
Kanavaik kanavendru-unarndavanai kanaval nee yar ena oruvan
Vinavil avanum nanavadanil vilangum tanaye uratippan adil
nanavai ninaiw-endiru unarndavanai nanaval nee yar ena oruvan
vinavil avanum akandamadai vilangum brahmame embai
were not on equal footing. In the example part (drśhtanta), the conversation is said to take place between two persons **sharing the waking state** (and is about a dream one of them has woken up from). Whereas in the part signifying the actual (darśhtanta), the conversation is not between two who are **sharing the Awakened state**, but between one who is in the waking state and another who has 'woken up' from it. How could one, upon Awakening from a dream still perceive it such as to hold a conversation with an entity within the dream! After grappling with this for a while I left it at that. And soon forgot about it.

After several years I had a strange experience of dreaming. I was dreaming that I was awake and seated on a park-bench. I saw a man approaching in the distance. As soon as he came near I became aware that I was dreaming. This awareness did not cause a collapse of the dream. Instead it continued.

The man stood before me and asked softly, "I can see you're not from this place. Please tell me who you are". I knew of course that the park, the bench, the figure (my shadow dream-I) seated on it, and the man before it were all My dream. But a temporary connection with the 'shadow' figure on the bench, still seemed to remain for me. The dream was 'on live' and I saw the shadow dream-I lifting its hand, and pointing to its body, it answered, "Why, I am van Mukt". I was naturally aware then of being the true target of the shadow dream-I's pointing finger. The man then turned and walked away as softly as he had come. With his figure receding the dreaming receded too. I must have fallen asleep soon after. I did remember the strange experience upon waking up in the morning. There was a great longing to experience such waking-dreams again.

A week later someone placed a tattered copy of a book in my hands for me to repair it. Opening it I saw it was *Advaita Unmai*. I was reminded of the verse that had proved a hard nut to crack many years ago. When I now looked it up, I was astonished to see that the author was referring there to my experience! The same verse with punctuation altered, now said to me:

A person who realises a dream to be a dream, when asked **by another in the dream**, "Who are you?", would reply, "Why of course myself so-and-so", (referring to the awakened 'I'). So too, a person who realises the waking to be mind-born, when asked by another **in the waking**, "Who are you?", would reply, "Why of course, myself the impartite Brahman", (referring to the Awakened Self).

It has never been the same since. This waking has become Food. Waking-dream or not, the Seer continues. He is after all such stuff as dreams are made on.²

² [Shakespeare: *The Tempest*]
Reality In Forty Winks

By J. Jayaraman

INVOCATION TO GURU AS:

Visva (the waking-I)
May the Lord as did to Hlad\textsuperscript{1} of yore
Grant mine all desires perforce
Flow to Him.
Nothing more.

Taijasa (the dream-I)
Bumble bee buzzing by
Lo, the Lotus in the sky
Of the Heart begins to bloom.
Yours, O Sun, this paean of praise
Ah, delightful Doom!

PROLEGOMENA

This article is a quest proceeding from first principles readily acceptable to all. Using the facts of dream experience, inferences are made and conclusions are drawn, inevitably leading the Intellect \textit{(vijñanamaya purusha)} onto the 'leap' into that Divine Truth beyond nescience. The person considering himself as awake within a dream cannot occasion a breakthrough using his intellect to analyse the world around him. This article promises no easy handout. Rather it demands of the reader, a series of meditations from first principles, into notions about one's individuality and being. It demands of the reader a readiness to sacrifice any cherished notion proved false at the altar of Reason. The article first establishes that the waking state is one where an individual is able to have the knowledge of 'waking-up from a dream'. It then establishes that waking-up from the waking-state (Self-Realisation) involves waking up from individuality — the sense of being an individual (ie some body) — which is common to both waking and dream

\textsuperscript{1} Prahlad (hla\textsuperscript{d}-glad; the happy one) who though implored by Lord Vishnu to ask for any boon chose only that all his desires should flow only towards the Lord \textit{[Bhagavata 7.10.7]}
states. The article then establishes why the 'gap' during the transition between waking and dream states must ever lie beyond the grasp of such individuality (a seer which is 'aware' only amidst sense data). When the individual fully imbibes this truth and becomes committed to it not only does great calm descend for the individual, but the witnessing of individuality itself flashes forth. In other words not only do all vagrant thoughts cease for the individual, but individuality itself is experienced as primal thought. A reader confident of the ‘leap’ beyond Reason right away, may pass on to the para On Forgetting: the meta-I, towards the end of the article.

THE SCOPE

An unbiased enquiry into the phenomenon of dreaming, and the phenomenon of forgetting (i.e. nescience or non-knowledge), both of which are sufficiently frequent, leads to an inescapable conclusion for the enquiring individual. This conclusion (about nescience) might get forgotten now and then, but can be regained by the very same line of enquiry time and again. However, there is many a slip between the cup and the lip, and it is only when one thirsts enough to allow that conclusion to rule (consume) one’s (the jiva’s) every waking moment, that the One wakes up. That which the One (isvara) wakes up from may then be called the Dream. But it is no ordinary dream. For, there occurs for The One ever remaining in the n-o-w-h-e-re, a waking up into The One, from that which may now be called The Dream (isvara srshti). For, though the Dream continues, there is no person within. Some recollection may linger about an earlier involvement with one of the forms in the Dream; a label of jnani or jivanmukta may get reverently applied to that form by other forms in the Dream; that form itself eventually transforms; through it all there arise no more the obsessions of duality for there exists no more an individual-self, centered on a particular form. Rather all forms and non-forms ‘become’ Self-centered.

IF SUPREME KNOWLEDGE EXISTS, WHAT WILL PROVE ITS FINALITY?

The removal of one’s hunger is never achieved by proxy. The ascertainment of the truth about a matter, which is really the removal of one’s ignorance about it, can be achieved only through the Light of one’s own (ultimately solitary) quest. The conclusions arrived at are to be checked for consonance with the conclusions of the wise of all ages. When a conclusion is at variance with these, then the fundamentals and every assumption ought to be doubted and questioned right down, if need be, to the Light of the questing individuality itself. That a truth is higher and stands by itself when it subsumes other truths which are in conflict with it is a fact that one readily accepts. It is self-evident elegance. The Solar-centric explanations for the sudden retrograde motion of some planets moving across our skies are simple and constitute a higher truth than the complex Geo-centric explanations for the same. The latter view was opposed to the former. But the former could accommodate the latter. However the Omni-cen-
metic explanation for the omnipresence of the faint ‘echo’ of a Big Bang constitutes a still higher truth (though still far from finality) as it subsumes the other two, and goes on to explain galactic rotations and blackholes. It is such self-evident elegance which decides finally if a conclusion stands by itself or not. That truth is Supreme which stands self-evident owing to its easy capacity to accommodate an infinite variety of conflicting and hence lesser truths within its domain — a level of tolerance the lesser truths just couldn’t demonstrate. The hero in the motion picture may wield his sword all over the screen and deny the existence of any screen anywhere near him. It would be a lesser truth if he concluded, “all talk of a cloth screen here, is just yet another ‘yarn’”. The Higher truth of the screen in the cinema-hall not only subsumes the hero’s world, but it also accommodates the hero’s lesser truths as fully valid within his world.

THE DATUM

When one considers life moment by moment one finds that it consists only of sense-experience, or of recollections of sense-experience. The sense-experience (rupa) usually has a ‘knee-jerk’ response in word-form (nama). This accompani-
ment is so well ‘set’ since childhood, that this learnt response is hardly ever experienced as a recollection which it really is. This chattering usually accom-
panies sense-experience. However, vasanas operate even in the silencing of the chattering and can initiate recollec-
tions devoid of labelling; e.g. a sequence of related images. In such cases it is only at the end of a sequence of recollection that one is able to infer the action and presence, of mind. While reading a book for example we might at some point get drawn into a reverie, and suddenly return from the reverie to find that our eyes had actually reached the page end where we would have to turn the page for the eye to move on! The knowledge regarding the reverie arises only then upon ‘return’. We also recall nothing about what our eyes had read during that period. It is also a fact that our eyes had actually, faithfully and habitually traversed all those lines. Upon backing up some distance we do reach the passage where we get a ‘connection’ and realise that to be the point from which we had (unknowingly) drifted off. During the reverie, we neither had the knowledge about the presence of the printed page, nor the knowledge of the absence of the printed page. In short there was nescience (avarana) about the printed page during the reverie (vikshepa).

nescience

In fact when a sequence of recollections begins (as in a day-dream, or while dreaming) there is nescience regarding the waking state including our exit from it. Nescience and Knowledge therefore exist ‘side by side’ within a state, as well as between states.

Within a state: When involved solely with visual sense, knowledge arises as, “I can see objects”, when there is light, and knowledge arises as “I cannot see ob-
jects” when light fails. During this if one remained ‘disconnected’ from the sense
of hearing, then no knowledge would arise about the presence or the absence of sound.

**Between states:** When dreaming, there arises no knowledge about the presence or the absence of the waking world, i.e. there is nescience regarding the waking world, while there is knowledge within the dream-world. The dream sequence itself (one finds upon waking), does not obey any waking order and is found to proceed fuelled by hope and fear, pursuit and avoidance. (Some visions are exceptions and are not considered now). Whichever ‘fuel’ was predominant in the waking individual established the theme within the dream. And when we return from the recollection or dream — and only then, if at all — knowledge arises about the dream. This knowledge would by inference, yield for anyone who cares to reflect upon it, three truths:

**THE THREE TRUTHS:**

**FIRST TRUTH:** “I am now aware of having dreamt”.

**SECOND TRUTH:** “I can recall its contents as being a sequence, solely of sense-experiences and recollections.”

**THIRD TRUTH:** “I could recall nothing of this waking world, I could experience nothing of the march of this world’s order, then during the dream”.

We shall look into the **THREE TRUTHS**, starting with the **SECOND**.

**Meditation on the second truth:** The dream while it lasts is indistinguishable from waking; that is, one usually doesn’t have reason to doubt the ‘fact’ of being awake at that time. Even strange experiences get unquestioningly accepted normal. Even if such events do get noticed as ‘impossible’ that knowledge by itself does not enable us to dismiss the total experience (i.e. the individual and the sensory world which surrounds him and limits him). In short merely remarking to oneself, “I must be dreaming”, or hearing from some teacher within the dream, “This is all a dream” does not cause a collapse of the dreaming. Worse, reading literature on waking up, practising to imagine that one has woken up, in short, all techniques initiating activity or initiating non-activity (of limbs, body, breath, sense-organs or mind-imagery) undertaken by a persistent individual within the dream, only furthers the dream. Notice that I have not said “...further his dream”. For, the dream is not the dream of the individual within the dream. It is the dream of the individual who wakes up to utter the **FIRST TRUTH**. It is he who says, “I am now aware of having dreamt. However, it was myself as *I* in the dream, not somebody else as ‘I’. For it was I who performed actions and felt emotions within the dream while it was happening. It is again I who now recollect it. I do fully accept that my ideas, hopes and fears, my pursuit and avoidance in this waking-world have fuelled the projection of a dream of which I am the sole author. But inexplicably, and without my witnessing its creation not only did the dream-world arise, I seem to have suddenly then become an individual trapped within that world and worse, tossed about by an uncompromising circumstance. So the dream-world,
myself (the 'I' sense within it) and the dream-destiny beyond my control, all of these came from the same source". That is, the dream-I, plus the dream-world of senses and recollections experienced by that 'I', plus the forces of dream-circumstance which shape the 'life' of the dream-I, together constitute the waking individual. In other words the waking individual (jiva) is the waking-I amalgamated with hopes and anxieties picked up amidst the circumstances of life in the waking-world. It is this amalgamation which makes the waking-world of the child, the youngster, two lovers, the thief, the well-to-do, and the starving, unique to each (jiva srṣhti).

THE TWO INFERENCES:

A slow and steady assimilation of the above meditation leads one to an 'insight' about the waking state itself. One may reason, "I agree that the dream-world, plus the dream-fate oppressing the dream-I arose solely from my waking mind. Also while the dream was going on I reacted to the dream-circumstances in a manner which, I can now say (having woken up), has its basis in the anxieties and hopes that are a part of me in this waking world. THE FIRST INFRINGEMENT: Can I not conclude from this that this waking world and the circumstances which arise within it and oppress me (i.e. the waking individual) are the Dream of a meta-Individual? [meta, when used as a prefix in this article, means: that which wakes up from something and simultaneously has knowledge about that waking-up, e.g. upon just 'surfacing' from a dream, the entity which has the knowledge: "I have been dreaming" is termed as meta dream-I]. And, THE SECOND INFRINGEMENT: Can I not further conclude that the hopes and anxieties of that Meta-I (īśvara) have been reflected in me, just as my own in turn get reflected into the 'I' in my dream?"

THE NEED FOR ESTABLISHING CONSONANCE WITH REVELATIONS:

To establish the validity of the two inferences, we should meditate on the implications of a 'waking up' from this waking world, and then check if those implications are in consonance with the Revelations of those who not only 'woke up' but (and this is very mysterious, and seems to beat all logic!) communicated the event of a 'waking up' for the benefit of (the forms which go by the name of) human beings within the Dream called waking-world. One may straight away question the need for checking for consonance with Revelations presumed to have come 'into' the waking-world from that Meta-I which is beyond it. One may argue, "When I wake up from a dream, there is no dream any longer for me to communicate with. The dream-world collapsed with the dream-I and here I am 'outside' it. Where then is the possibility for me (the waking-I) to communicate through the dream-I to the denizens of the dream-world?" This is indeed true, as far as ordinary dream experiences form the basis of the argument.

LIVE DREAM: However, there is another kind of dreaming, which when it happens, can only be seen as a transcendant gift. For in this case, one
becomes alive to the fact that one is dreaming and yet, the dream continues with this important change: The dream-I continues within the continuing dream but only as a 'shadow' of the waking-I from then on. All through the ups and downs of the dream-circumstance the dream-I moves about making gestures and responses internally devoid of worldly emotions. The waking-I has only woken to the dream, but not woken into the waking world. This is an intermediate level before being 'born' fully into the waking-world as the waking-I and we shall refer to it as the meta-dream-I (i.e. that which woke up from the dream and has knowledge of the dreaming). Thus it retains a bare connection with the shadow dream-I. A slender sense of agency is experienced by the meta-dream-I with respect to the actions of the shadow. That is, knowledge of the form "I do", "I walk", "I speak" arise in the meta dream-I whenever the shadow does, walks or speaks. The meta-dream-I experiences as if the shadow were merely its mouthpiece. Simultaneous with that, the meta dream-I experiences the whole dream (i.e. including all the phenomena in the dream) as a live emanation from itself.

We can return now to the TWO INFERENCES. For, we have shown that the 'live' dream experience as analysed above, is itself sufficient basis for us to allow the possibility that even the Meta-I (isvara) could inject revelations into this waking world through some 'mouthpieces' which those in the waking-world address as 'the awakened ones'. There are of course mouthpieces and mouthpieces (and some mouthpieces become 'alive' and declare themselves to be the mouthpiece, and some other mouthpieces declare themselves to be the Meta-I). So we shall be wary of this and merely check the implications of our two inferences for consonance with only the highest of these 'revealed' truths. The meaning of the term 'higher truth' has been explained at the beginning of this article under the paragraph.

IF SUPREME KNOWLEDGE EXISTS, WHAT WILL PROVE ITS FINALITY?
The rest of this section finds itself proving that the First Inference is valid and that the Second Inference is false.

PROVING THE FIRST INFEERENCE TRUE:

MEDITATION ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF A 'WAKING UP' FROM THE WAKING WORLD

Most of the meditation for this has been completed under the paragraph LIVE DREAM. Only some loose ends remain. To recapitulate, the meta dream-I is the intermediate level before being 'born' into the waking world as the waking-I. The meta dream-I has nescience about its own location. That is, neither the knowledge "I am located in a world", nor the knowledge "I am not located in any world" arises in the meta dream-I. (I hope the reader is so far with me in this living dream of a meditation!). Now it is possible that while witnessing the 'live' dream the question "Who am I?" may arise for the 'I' (i.e. the meta dream-I). The answer to this (i.e. the consequence of this question) is dictated by whether the enquirer is actually located anywhere or not. No doubt the meta dream-I (the
enquirer) has nescience about its location even though (as the THIRD TRUTH proves) it is actually (though nescient of it) located in the waking-world. As soon as the question “Who am I?” arises, the knowledge arises “I am not located in any world”. But this is false knowledge as seen in the previous sentence, and so this knowledge does not stay. It is replaced (killed, transcended) by the unavoidable (and sometimes slow) arising of the knowledge “I am located in the waking-world”. This event marks the birth of the meta-dream-I into the waking-world as the waking-I. In short one wakes up. On the other side of the coin, this event marks the collapse of the live dream. In summary, when one becomes aware that a dream is going on, and along with that knowledge if there also arises the growing awareness of being located in the waking-world then the dream collapses. Thus, every dream (during its tenure) is indistinguishable from the waking (see SECOND TRUTH), only till one becomes aware of the dreaming, whereupon one wakes up from the dream into the waking-world. The waking-world is therefore a dream that is punctuated by a variety of other dreams, and to which one always returns whenever knowledge of dreaming arises. ‘Waking up’ from this world is therefore no run-of-the-mill stuff. It implies being born as that Meta-I (isvara) for whom the dream called waking-reality continues (the maya shadow) and the knowledge “I am not located in any world” remains steady without collapsing (achyuta).

We can now state the implications of such a ‘waking up’:

**Implication one:** The waking-reality is seen as a continuing dream.

**Implication two:** Along with the above knowledge, and in answer to the question “Who am I?” (that is, the question “Who is dreaming of the waking-reality?”), there arises the knowledge “I am not located in any world — I am the principle of location in which ‘my’ dream the waking reality appears to go on — I am the self-aware”.

**Implication three:** When this Meta-I remains with the first knowledge (IMPLICATION ONE) it is Isvara (a.k.a. God, Jehova, Father in Heaven, Allah etc.). When the Meta-I remains with the second knowledge it is called Brahman(a.k.a. sunya, mauna etc.). In both these modes the Meta-I cannot but remain unchanged and non-dual. The first mode represents the Waking State (isvara jagrat) of Isvara (maha-mahat) when The Dream (maya) is witnessed ‘live’. The second mode represents the Dream State (isvara svapna) of Isvara (maha-avyakta, sambhoga-kaya) when The Dreamer turns ‘away’ from The Dream to look ‘within’; and continuing so, it is the Dreamless State (isvara sushupti) of Isvara (purusha, brahman, mahamauna, maha-sunya, dharmakaya) without ‘within’, just Being.

The above three IMPLICATIONS are now checked for consonance with the highest truths revealed in the waking world. We find full consonance with the revelations of a beginningless stream of persons: .... Vasishta, Uddalaka, Varuna, Yajnavalkya, Vyasa, Krishna, Socrates, Gaudapada, Sufi-mystics (Rabiya,
We have now proved the first inference as valid. In other words there is a waking up from the waking-world, and when that occurs, the Meta-I has the knowledge of not being located in any world. It also has the knowledge of witnessing the waking reality which continues as a live Dream. It should be obvious to the reader that the waking reality (i.e. the 'live' Dream, called pratibhasika sat) perceived by the Meta-I is not the same as the waking reality (i.e. the waking-world, called vyavaharika sat) perceived by the waking-I s within it. (A reference to the para on LIVE DREAM, which compared the dream-world as perceived by the dream-I on the one hand, with the 'live' dream perceived by the meta dream-I on the other, should clarify this). Stated in terms of the 'Sankara simile': the vyavaharika sat, that is the waking-world perceived by the waking-I (the jiva, whose vasanas convert the isvara srshti it perceives, into a jiva srshti!) within it, is the 'snake' perceived as a 'rope'. The pratibhasika sat (the 'live' Dream, the isvara srshti ever perceived as Dream, by Isvara) is the 'snake' (i.e. maya) ever associated with Isvara (the Meta-I, brahman) the paramarthika sat, the 'rope'.

The waking-I which was associated with the form (the physical body), prior to the 'waking up', continues to be perceived within the waking reality. The physical body (of the waking-I now addressed by others in the waking world as 'the realised one') continues to be subject to hunger, decay and death. The waking-I has internally no ups and downs of emotions. This is because the Meta-I is now the active principle, while the

We also find full consonance with the insights of a range of poets and scientists from Shakespeare to Schroedinger and Kalidasa to Kurt Godel.
waking-I is merely a shadow, a mouth-piece within the Meta-I's dream. The waking-I has no fear of death and disease, and responds (through its organs of sense, organs of action and memory and intellect), flowing with the needs of the moment within the waking reality. For these reasons there are no dreams, or reveries, or any such things based on involuntary thinking for the shadow waking-I. This scenario represents the fully awakened jivanmukta within the waking-reality. When the jivanmukta form dissolves, the Dream called the waking-reality does not become devoid of a mouth-piece. For, there is a continuous 'waking-up' going on, 'here and there' from the infinity of waking-I s in the Dream. (The reader need not get too worked up about this aside. These will be the conclusions and later, experience of anyone treading with the Light of reason, which is what the meditations of this article exemplify). Whether the 'live' Dream goes on or not does not affect the inherent nature of the Meta-I. A question may arise: "Why should the Meta-I (i.e. isvāra) be ever associated with the phenomenon of the live Dream called waking-reality (i.e. maya)?". This is a question that arises for the waking-I within the domain of the waking-world. This is a question which can be investigated only by a 'waking up' into the Meta-I. All investigation of this question from within the waking-world is betrayal of Reason, and mere jabberwocky (like the conclusions of the hero in the movie example in the section IF SUPREME KNOWLEDGE EXISTS, WHAT WILL PROVE ITS FINALITY ?).

To repeat therefore, the FIRST INFERENCE has been proved valid. I can imagine a reader here and there protesting: "The FIRST INFERENCE was proved using the experience of the 'live' dream. But I do not remember ever experiencing such a living-dream myself. So I am not in a position alas! to real-ise the reasoning employed in that proof". I must hasten to assure the reader that there is no need for panic. There is another proof:

AN ALTERNATE WAY TO PROVE THE FIRST INFERENCE AS TRUE:

A PITFALL TO BE AVOIDED FIRST

There lies a pitfall for one not grasping the import of the revelation of the 'awakened one' regarding the waking-world. The sage says: "The waking-world and dreams are essentially the same. Waking is just another dream. Mind creates waking as Mind creates dream". The seeker interprets it as: "Just as my mind created the dream-world, my mind creates the waking-world also". There is a faux pas (false step) here for all to see. There is a step in reasoning missed out. It is not as if we do not employ reason or that we lack strength. This is proved by our clever plans and polite manipulations of people and circumstances all the time, to achieve our personal goals, often under cloak of altruism. So we all do have sufficient Reason but we do not apply it all the way especially in this ulti-
mate quest — and here, we are led by our deepest hidden desires lest we destroy our fondest illusion. The sage actually meant: "The idea of being located within a world is common to both waking and dreaming. And so they are both the same". The seeker for reasons stated above, would rather conclude that the waking-world and dreams are same (i.e. figments of his imagination), whereas he ought to have concluded: "My existence as an entity located within this waking-world is illusory. So my realisation of this only means being free of this illusion of location within this waking-world. The presence or absence of the waking-world, subsequent to that realisation will get automatically established upon that event. And, most important, whether this waking-reality is found to be or not be (upon that event) — in either case, it can have no say on my realisation that I am not located in any world".

With a half-hearted reasoning (the faux pas mentioned above), the seeker wallows in the solipsistic illusion that he creates this waking-world every time he wakes up in the morning, or after a daydream. This illusion after all has the seeds of psychosis. To sum up: there is urgent need to reason and arrive at inferences based on one’s own experiences of dream and waking. Let us do just that. After doing that we can easily check the SECOND INFERENCE:

**MEDITATION ON RECURRING DREAMS:** If one were merely transiting from one dream to another and so on, and if none of these dreams recurred sufficiently to give rise to the feeling of *deja vu* (the "I've been here before" feeling) then the knowledge regarding one’s dreaming would never arise. One’s daily dream experience proves this. Suppose that during one long night one were to roller-coast as follows: WAKING-to DREAM ONE-to DREAM TWO- back to DREAM ONE and finally back to WAKING. In such a scenario, the knowledge "I just woke up from a dream" arises only while entering DREAM ONE (during the transit from DREAM TWO to DREAM ONE) and while entering WAKING (during the transit from DREAM ONE to WAKING). During all other transits there is nescience during the transit. Why is this so? It is the recurrence of the DREAM ONE and the WAKING which occasion re-cognition (deja vu). Alongside of this arises the knowledge: "I have woken up from a dream". The dream called waking-world is outstanding because no other dream repeats in such a fashion, and because of this uniqueness, all abiding knowledge of ‘dream’ arises only through the *deja vu* (i.e. *pratyabhijna*) that occurs while re-entering the waking-world. So if it were not for the dogged recurrence of the waking-world, one would never be aware that one had been dreaming, (or for that matter, that one had been lost in reverie or thought). Can there be a greater horror story of nescient wandering? Of course the recurrence of the waking-world can be ‘explained’ by the solipsist, as : "The waking-world is the favourite among my dreams, and so my mind recreates that dream frequently". But this explanation cannot account for the awesome mystery and march of intelligent cosmic order (*rtam*), even though one (ie the waking-I) may be nescient of it during dreaming...
(and reverie and flight of thought). We will meditate on this aspect of *rtam* (i.e. *isvara srshti*) while dealing with the SECOND INFERENCE and the related subject of *jiva srshti* (individual waking-world creation). Now we are ready to get on with:

**REVALIDATING THE FIRST INFERENCE: (without making use of 'live' dreams)**

From the knowledge "I have just woken up from dreaming", the FIRST INFERENCE stated: "Could there be a further waking up from the dream called waking-world?" We can now conclude that such 'waking up' demands that, along with the transition out of the waking-world, knowledge should also arise about the transition. Does this demand for knowledge of the transition, in turn necessitate a transition into another recurring dream-world, leaving this recurring waking-world behind? (See the above MEDITATION ON RECURRING DREAMS). Clearly none will be content with such a 'waking up', which would after all only be a case of 'six of one and half-a-dozen of the other'! The new waking-world that one would wake up into would, by and by be same old wine in same old bottle. This sort of a waking up is therefore rejected. And with this is rejected all scope for a waking-up by 'entering' another world. With this, one seems left with the only choice (the Hobson's) of a waking-up into the knowledge: "I am not located in any world". Now we know that waking-up, (with the knowledge of the waking-up) is possible only where there is recognition of a recurrence. But the Hobson's choice does not guarantee that there would be a recurrence (and therefore the recognition of the recurrence) when one exited from the waking-world into the knowledge: "I am not located in any world". (If this seems to be an insoluble dead-end you are right. And wrong. For, it is a dead-end, and it is soluble). The 'waking up' can therefore only imply that one wakes up from the knowledge: "I am located in this waking-world", to the knowledge: "I am not located in this waking-world". That is to say there is no exiting from, or entry into a world. Therefore, while the waking world continues, there is a waking up from the knowledge: "I am located in this waking-world" to the knowledge: "I am not located in this waking-world". This marks the waking up from the waking-I to the Meta-I. The Meta-I has the knowledge "I am not located in the waking reality. 'Waking up' is only the extinction of the illusion of being located in the waking-world". The waking world (*isvara srshti*) as experienced by the Meta-I is not at all the waking world (*jiva srshti*) as experienced by the waking-I before extinction of the illusion. After the extinction of the illusion of location, the waking-I (the *jivan mukta* as revered by other forms in the dream) is merely a 'corpse' within. The memory of the events during the life of that physical form (including the memory of the waking up) as registered in the physical form continue till the death of the form (*nirvana* as referred to by others). This brief 'period' of time (from the point of waking up, to the point of *nirvana*) marks the period of revelation, through living example within the dream called waking-world, of that which transcends
speech. We have used an alternate way to prove the FIRST INFERENCE as valid using only dream experience. We now move on to:

MEDITATION PROVING THE SECOND INFERENCE FALSE

To recapitulate, the seeker says: “I agree there is a waking up from the waking-world. I also see that the waking-I projects a dream-world (i.e. projects the dream-I, the dream circumstances binding the dream-I) only from its own fears, hopes and anxieties. Can I (the waking-I) not infer that these anxieties etc. have their source in the Meta-I?”. There are two ways to check this inference. THE FIRST APPROACH: The FIRST INFERENCE proved that the Meta-I is not located in any world. It is therefore self-existent, self-aware and non-dual (whether the Dream called waking-Reality is perceived by it or not). So there is no scope in it for fears, anxieties etc! The source for the waking-I’s anxieties must therefore be sought by the waking-I within its waking-world. While this was an elegant ‘quickie’, THE SECOND APPROACH plods slowly through dreams: We shall undertake a thought experiment. Suppose the waking-I to be dreaming in which the dream-I accidentally slips off a precipice and is hurting below to certain death in a few seconds. The helpless terror of the dream-I as it hurtles down causes the waking-I to wake up in a sweat and say: “Heavens! How false it has all turned out to be!” After repeated reference to this (i.e. manana), the waking-I says: “I can now see that no event within the dream-world can ever kill me the waking-I. I can now see that

the dream-I, which is an illusory location of myself within dream-circumstance, cannot lead to my death when it (the dream-I) ‘dies’”. We can now reasonably reconstruct four courses the dream could have taken, depending upon how instinctively the dream-I holds on to the concept: “No event in this world can affect my ‘true’ nature. I do not experience it, but if I remained convinced of its truth, I will realise myself as the waking-I, when a waking-up occurs”. Note that this in turn depends entirely on how well the waking-I practises the concept: “No event in this world can affect my ‘true’ nature. I do not experience it, but if I remained convinced of its truth, I will realise myself as the Meta-I, when a waking-up occurs”. The deeply held desires of the waking-I will determine the motive with which it practises this concept in its daily life in the waking-world. The zeal with which it practises determines how the motives operate in dreams.

DREAM COURSE ONE: This was the nightmare ending with a waking up in sweat. Comment: Fear of a hurting physical death rises above all other concepts and there is a waking up.

DREAM COURSE TWO: The dream-circumstances conspire towards a physical survival (with or without injury) for the dream-I. Comment: The waking-I has conviction that no event in the waking-world can destroy its essential nature which it believes to be the Meta-I. During the dream, though there is strong fear, the concept of indestructibility manages to survive. Dreaming continues.

DREAM COURSE THREE: The ‘physi-
cal body lies shattered. There may or may not be the throes of 'death'. But soon enough, a disembodied dream-I stands as 'spirit' involved in continuing dream-circumstance. Comment: The waking-I has grasped the concept of indestructibility imperfectly, and so while it practises that in the waking-world, it begins to see itself as disembodied, even while moving about in the waking-world. The reader should not conclude that such tendencies belong to psychic 'cases' whereas he is 'normal'. For, much of the waking hours, even of the non-psychic are spent in chronic wandering in daydreams. These fantasies are not of another world. They are exact reconstructoins of one's waking-world (i.e. with all the waking laws of science and the psychology of relationships operating as usual) but with this difference: During these fantasies, circumstances (which as we have said, are the same as the current circumstances of the waking-world) are 'bent' favourably in order that the waking-I can have the foretaste of fulfilment of current dominant desires. The fantasising waking-I has no clear idea how the circumstances should really change. This is because the real motives (behind its current desires) bloom into view one by one, as successive desires get fulfilled. Therefore the 'bending' of circumstance in fantasy proceeds step by step governed by the motive coming into the waking-I's ken at every step. Psychic being involves a waking-I which learns by practise, to initiate such fantasy (based on the current circumstances of its waking-world) in a purposeful and intense manner. The reconstruction through fantasy is immediately reflected in (i.e. makes inroads into) the minds of others who are closely related (in terms of shared needs, feelings, ideals etc) and the intrusion is experienced by the latter as sensory phenomena making up a vision within the waking-world. It is not our purpose to go deeper into this subject. Suffice to say that inner motives alone determine whether one becomes silent, a saviour, or psychic, or psychotic.

DREAM COURSE FOUR: The 'physical' body survives. There is a waking up, while the dream continues. Comment: This is the LIVE DREAM discussed earlier under the FIRST INFERENCE. The meta dream-I is fascinated by the dreaming; it has a lively interest in the events within the dream. The events cause no anxiety as the meta dream-I knows it is not located within the dream (though it is nescient, as we saw, about its own location), and therefore it is free from fear of threat from circumstances within the dream.

We have proved that the source of anxieties etc lie in the incomplete investigation by the waking-I of its own dream and waking-worlds. All anxieties are the waking-I's own creation. There is therefore no basis for inferring that the Meta-I has anxieties etc, and that these are passed on to the waking-I. The second inference is therefore not only wrong it is also useless since, even supposing it were true (which it is not), it leads to the absurdity of infinite regress, that notorious narcotic of nihilist mind. We have now invalidated in two ways the second inference.
A FORAY FINALLY INTO FORTY WINKS!

ISVARA SRSHTI

The discerning reader would have noticed that the three implications of the FIRST INFERENCE point to a waking reality (isvara srshti) which continues even while the waking-I is nescient of it, say while dreaming. This may be a bitter pill for some (conditioned as they are by a wrong grasp of what Advaitic scripture reveals) due to the faux pas described in detail earlier. They protest: “It is easy to accept that the waking-world does continue when I am drawn into reverie or thought. But during dreamless sleep surely the world and my body did not exist at all [this is their FIRST FAULT], since I was unaware of them then [this is their SECOND FAULT]”. This is Reason blinded by fanaticism. Proof follows:

Meditation on the first fault: Consider the following: One imbibes two litres of red beet juice and goes to sleep. One wakes up after several hours without any dream memory coming up. One rushes to the toilet (naturally), and on passing reddish water is suddenly reminded of the not a little ‘night cap’. This proves that the complex body-processes were active even during the nescience of dreamless sleep. The cosmic Order (rtam; isvara srshti) including one’s body in the waking-world, continues though one may become nescient of it during a swoon or sleep.

Meditation on the second fault: One’s own experience must form the datum for one to reason upon. A thorough reasoning must still be cross-checked with Revelation. From this point of conformity with Revelation (sruti), strategies arise for application (not compromise!) in day-to-day life (yukti), which when practised without let, results in the ‘waking up’ (anubhava). In the absence of the first step, it is sheer nescience to imagine that nescience has been understood merely by acquiring familiarity with scriptural quotation.

We now consider the example of waking up one morning to find that no memories of dreaming arise. That is, we consider the statement: “I was unaware of body in dreamless sleep”. The knowledge of the form: “There is now unawareness of body and the world”, did not arise during the ‘gap’ one glibly labels as dreamless sleep (sushupti). So one is reporting wrongly when one says upon waking up: “I was unaware of world and body at that time”. Actually when all efforts at reconstructing the ‘gap’ (after waking up) fails, then the knowledge arises (for the waking-I): “I cannot now remember anything about the ‘gap’. There is total nescience now about the ‘gap’. That is, there is no memory now of one’s experience then of a world; there is no memory now of non-experience then of a world; and (as a crowning ‘glory’), there is no memory now of having had an inability then to cognise the non-experience of the world”. Briefly stated, there ‘seems’ to have been nescience then regarding one’s nescience. We say ‘seems’, for, we shall soon see that we are so ‘forgetful’ that we might be simply God then, and simply forget about it.
every time! For those who find this a bit difficult to ‘crack’ the following example would help ‘half-way’: In the presence of light we are able to cognise visually, the presence and the absence of objects. In the absence of light we can visually estab­lish neither the presence of objects nor their absence. We do however cognise our inability to do so, i.e. We cognise our nescience about the existence of objects. In short, we are not nescient about our nescience.

One can probe ‘forgetfulness’ only after acquiring an ability to probe our cognition of dream. The example of ‘reading a book’ (see section, THE DATUM) is very useful now. Upon returning from the reverie (or a dream) the following is the ‘slow-motion’ sequence in which knowledge arises in the waking-I. The example of ‘reading a book’ is kept up to STEP D. From STEP E onwards the example of waking-up from a dream is used:

STEP A: The last line of a printed page is experienced. (The waking-world is experienced).

STEP B: Deja vu arises about the printed page. (Deja vu about the waking-world).

STEP C: The deja vu picture is different from the current picture in that the eyes are now remembered to have been at the top of the page whereas they are now found staring at the bottom line. So there arises knowledge of a ‘difference’.

STEP D: There arises knowledge of a ‘gap’ (to account for the difference).

STEP E: “Where was I?” or “What happened (during the gap)?” is the query that arises at this point.

STEP F1: Almost immediately arises the response: “I was dreaming”.

STEP G1: One recollects piece by piece the contents of the dream. Comment: The waking-I accepts: “While the dream was on, there was no cognition of my inability to experience the printed page (i.e. the waking-world)”. That is, having woken up, I don’t recollect having had any knowledge (during the dream) of the form: “I am now aware of having nescience about the existence of the waking-reality (i.e. ‘the printed page’)”. Here nescience of waking reality means: being in the dark about the existence of the waking-reality (‘the printed page’). That is, not knowing if the waking-reality did exist or didn’t exist. During the dream therefore there seems to have been nescience of nescience regarding the waking-reality.

STEP G2: This is a variant of STEP G1. There are instances when, in STEP E, knowledge of dream arises, but that’s all. One doesn’t have any memory regarding the dream contents (i.e. the dream theme). The waking-I says: “I know I was dreaming. But I can’t remember anything about the dream contents”. The waking-I in other words has nescience regarding the dream contents. Of course, the waking-I has no doubt now, that the dream must have been composed of sense-experiences (refer SECOND TRUTH), but the waking-I doesn’t have any memory now, about having undergone sense-experiences in the dream. The fact now before the reader is: In the absence of any memory now, regarding dream
contents, the waking-I recalled that there was a dream! This proves that even prior to waking up (i.e. prior to STEP A), there must have been at least one solitary occurrence of the knowledge: “I was dreaming”; and that must have been accompanied by at least one solitary occurrence of knowledge about the dream ‘theme’.

STEP F2: This is a variant of F1. One wakes up and is unable to recollect anything about the ‘gap’ stated in STEP D. In other words, one seems to have nescience not only about the dream contents but about the dreaming itself. It happens many a time that one goes about the daily routine, and then some event suddenly triggers a memory, and one says: “I just now remembered that I had dreamt last night about such-and-such a thing”. Till that trigger one might even have insisted when questioned by another, “No, I didn’t have any dreams last night”. Most of one’s talk about the ‘dreamless state’ is actually forgotten dreams! There is another example for this. Sometimes one is woken up from sound sleep by, say, loud revelry by neighbours returning after a late night out. One might even respond sleepily with a “Good night!” when they sign off with a loud greeting towards one’s bedroom, and thereafter one might fall asleep again. No memory of this incident arises upon waking in the morning. Later perhaps, when one meets the neighbours, then the incident of the midnight waking-up, springs to memory. Those among us who feel that they did not dream at all ought to verify (their forgetfulness about having dreamt) after cutting out daytime naps and drastically cutting down on night sleep. They would then cognise much dream-wandering (vikshepa) and also their forgetfulness (avarana). Nescience and thought-wandering are two sides of the same coin, and one strengthens the other as we shall see further on.

We had undertaken this meditation in order to probe the ‘forgetfulness’ called sushupti, or should we say: of sushupti? We are half-way through it. This probe cannot be directly made right away. A person needs to be able to stand on the ground on one leg steadily, before he can get on to tight-rope walking. The salt-doll needs to ‘become’ more salt and less doll in order to persist through dissolution of form. One needs to meditate during waking, on the state of affairs that must exist during, and after, the collapse of dream-space. This really means intending to remain without wandering through involuntary thought, during the waking-hours. This strengthens the ability to witness the rising of thought (and so, by and by, to witness the rising of the waking-world). This alone can bring about a familiarity with, (and thus a witnessing of), that duration during the duration. We have now sufficient insight to summarise the various types of waking-up that can happen, and the remembrance and non-remembrance (upon waking), regarding having dreamt or regarding dream contents:

MEDITATION ON WAKE-UP TRIGGERS

TRIGGER ONE: A crocodile climbs on to one’s bed and attempts to chew at one foot, while one is ‘away’ dreaming of a Himalayan trek. One is very trau-
matically woken up, and the encounter with the beast would preempt any knowledge arising regarding dreaming. The wake-up sequence therefore ends in STEPS: A-B-C-D-E-F2.

TRIGGER TWO: A dream crocodile begins to chew one's foot, and one wakes up with much heart-thumping relief. The wake-up sequence is STEPS: A-B-C-D-E-G1-F1-G1. At the first G1 the complete theme of the dream is not cognised; instead one usually cognises the last dream-thought that was active at the instant of the sudden waking-up. The knowledge F1 which says: "I was dreaming", follows. If the waking-I is sufficiently curious about the contents of the dream, then a slow recapture of the dream-theme follows (see G1).

[Time for a short treatment regarding formation of dreams: Each thought can be thought of as a momentary environment with an 'I' (let us call it, 'thought-I'), within it. The vasanas of the thought-I determine which thought (from the among the infinite network of thoughts) would become the 'next' thought. The 'next' thought could be the one having maximum 'linkages' of environment with the 'current' thought. This is usually the case. For, the vasanas require fulfilment, and that requires a durable environment for the 'I' to get down to business. Successive thoughts, with maximum linkages between the environments within them, naturally provide an 'enduring environment'. A quick-flowing stream of highly connected thoughts brings up the 3-dimensional effect of a stable dream-space with a dream-I located within it. (The Magic Eye books which were popular in 1995 are an excellent way to witness one's own brain, processing 2-dimensional visual data initially as a blurred 'mess'; and then suddenly, when there arises maximum co-relation between the images presented out-of-focus for the two eyes, the brain 'locks' on to the correlated image, and then there springs up before the Mind's Eye, (for one can witness the activity of one's own brain at that time!), a truly grand, colourful three—dimensional environment (whereas there actually exists only a 2-dimensional blur of coloured printed matter on the page). Depth and distance, as experienced by us visually is thus a mental construct].

TRIGGER THREE: At the point of consummation of a deep desire, the dream-I may experience guilt (as dictated by the social taboos oppressing the waking-I). The dream-I can also become very wary about being watched. This can initiate a semi waking-up where only F1 and G1 arise. It may then happen that one 'falls back to sleep'. Later, one wakes up as usual, and the sequence is: STEPS: A-B-C-D-E-F1-G1. The italics is to point out that these two are merely the resurfacing of the F1 and G1 cognised already and 'forgotten'.

TRIGGER FOUR: Here, the dream theme runs its full course. That is, the vasanas fuelling the stream of thematically connected dream-thoughts get exhausted. That is, succeeding thoughts are not limited to those that serve the thematic criterion. Thoughts, with less and less connections with the previous thought, appear with increasing frequency. And with this weakening of 'con-
nectedness’ between thoughts, the 3-D movie called ‘dream’ collapses into a traffic of disjointed thoughts. At this point the knowledge: “There was dreaming”, may arise for an entity we name here as meta-dream-I. But without a reinforcement of that (through holding on to that knowledge; dharana), the knowledge is ‘weak’. That is, one may fall back into ‘sleep’, and later on, that knowledge does not resurface upon waking up. When one wakes up, the sequence is A-B-C-D-E-F2. It should be obvious to the reader that most of one’s feeling upon waking up, that one didn’t dream is merely a case of forgetting that one had dreamt. And, the crucial point now is: when the ‘weak’ knowledge (see above) ‘died’, there must have, at least momentarily, reigned the knowledge “There is nescience here” — and this has also been forgotten! [The term ‘meta-I’ is now defined here as the entity, albeit momentary, which cognized a nescience of sense-world; ie, of waking or dream world. We shall see that even this entity is not fully ‘woken up’ from the waking-world. It is not the Meta-I (isvara).

The above four TRIGGERS are within the common experience of all.

TRIGGER FIVE: This is a variant of TRIGGER FOUR in that the waking-I has developed keen interest and practise during waking, with regard to witnessing thought, and retracing of daydreams from the moment knowledge arises: “I have been day-dreaming”. The presence of this habit ensures that as the dream-theme peters out (as we saw in TRIGGER FOUR), and when the knowledge, “There was dreaming” arises, there is a holding on to that. This results in a retracing of dream-thought and thus an apprehension of dream-theme. Sometimes during this semi waking-up there may even arise the thought: “I must remember this dream-theme when I wake up”. This may be followed by a petering out of thought-traffic. Even if meta-I ‘appeared’ at this stage (as in TRIGGER FOUR) cognising the presence of nescience, this is not properly witnessed due to some ‘weakness’. In other words, as we saw in TRIGGER FOUR, nescience of nescience ‘takes over’. There is non-cognition of the inability to cognise the presence or the absence of thought. However, when one wakes up later on there arises remembrance of the dreaming and the dream-theme. The sequence on waking-up is, again: A-B-C-D-E-F1-G1.

ON FORGETTING: The Meta-I

We have finally reached the portals of ‘forgetfulness’. At the end of the last paras we ‘reached’ a knowledge-of-nescience, and then a nescience-of-nescience ‘into’ which the knowledge of STEPS F1 and G1 disappeared, and from which it resurfaced (F1 and G1) upon waking up. It should be the experience of the discerning reader that when the sense, of being located in the dream-world, gives way smoothly to the sense, of being located in the waking-world, then there is a duration ‘in between’ where the sense of being ‘located’ must be absent. In other words the dream-I is ‘converted’ by a waking, into meta-dream-I, which in turn is ‘converted’ to the duration, however brief, called meta-I (which is that which has the cognition of nescience). When the waking-I ‘appears’
along with the knowledge, of being located in the isvara srshti (which it cognises as waking-world), it can be cognised as arising from the meta-I. [It should be obvious by now that though the meta-I is not, like the waking-I, in a sense-world, it is simply the root egoity, the root nescience, the root idea of location. As per this article’s definition of ‘meta’, the meta-I is that into which meta-dream-I or the meta-waking-I disappear. It can be viewed as the root waking-I cognising its inability to experience sense-world. Its nescience about its location actually indicates its ‘location’ almost inseparably amidst nescience. The meta-I is therefore not the Meta-I which must lie beyond all location. Though both do not apprehend duality, the former is non-dual in nescience, and the latter in omniscience].

As regards ‘waking-up’ from the meta-I as the Meta-I; as to the role of Japa and Atma Vichara in this, and related implications in sadhana and daily life; we shall see in the next issue of the Mountain Path. For the intervening ‘gap’, here is some food for ‘non-thought’:

It is not difficult to accept that we all, do remember, the following experience: There are rare occasions when, as one wakes up from slumber, the knowledge arises: “I am”. One is aware that one must be on the bed, in one’s bedroom, in short in a world, but try as one might, one cannot actually experience where (i.e. in what environment) one is. Nor does the knowledge arise as to how one is oriented (i.e. whether east lay to one’s front, or to the rear or to one’s side). This is the meta-I. It is referred in other terminologies as I-thought, I-am-ness, akhandaakaara-vrttietc. It has knowledge of the form: “There is pure nescience here”. “There is no thought arising here”. (To be continued)

He whose buddhi is no longer attracted towards desires and pleasures, whose nature has become joyful and compassionate, he who, even in his heart, has no idea of possessions, who is ever peaceful and most temperate in all things and is not moved by any happenings or events — that Sage takes refuge in Atman. Ever watchful, solemn as the ocean and full of patience.

Avadhut Gita, Ch. VII, v.3.

Any attempt to review a work by Sri Narayana Guru is bound to be like the legendary brahmin's attempt to plumb the depth of the kshirasagara — futile! And any attempt to review the translation and exposition of one of his major works by none other than Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati is indeed a challenging task well beyond the capabilities of one like me! Thus my limitations are what I am much too aware of as I write this. The book under reference is a compilation of the discourses of Nitya Chaitanya Yati on the Atmopadesa Satakam of Narayana Guru, and it carries the entire text of the original Malayalam work in transliterated form plus its rough prose translation and extended commentaries. Edda Walker in her foreword writes: "One could say that I have lived each word in this book to the full... This is the sublime vision of Narayana Guru transmitted through the sublime vision of Guru Nitya and rendered in his words." After going through one guru's insightful bhashyam of another's instructive kavyam any serious reader would feel exactly the same — fulfilled and illuminated! The book is indeed valuable.

Sri Narayana Guru (1854-1928) was a mystic, philosopher, poet and social reformer. Born in Chempazhanti in Kerala, he envisioned the cause of a human solidarity where there would be only one caste, one community and one God. He preached and wrote in simple Malayalam, in order to be closer to his people, although he was quite conversant in both Sanskrit and Tamil too. Atmopadesa Satakam enshrines the wealth of his advaitic teaching. These one hundred verses of Self-Instruction formed the basic text for Nitya Chaitanya Yati to meditate and discourse on to a group of his devotees in Portland, Oregon, U.S.A. during the autumn of 1977. For one hundred days the group met and meditated on his illuminative exposition, and through the successive endeavours of one of them, Edda Walker, who compiled and translated Nitya Chaitanya Yati’s notes, the book evolved into its present form.

The following key verse would succinctly bring out Narayana Guru’s teaching:

avan ivan ennaryunnatokkeyottai
avan avan atma sukhattinacharikkunnavayaparannu sukhattinay varenam

(v. 24)

Nitya Chaitanya Yati translates thus:

"That man," "this man" — thus, all that is known in this world, if contemplated, is the being of the one primordial self; what each performs for the happiness of the self should be conducive to the happiness of another.

Sri Narayana Guru was an advaita vedantist who insisted on practising its implications in everyday living — in the social sphere this would mean a humanist understanding and philanthropy. His poetry is radical in that it is addressed to the underprivileged and strives towards the eradication of caste differentiations. Yati’s discourse, on account of its nature of address, strains after a metaphysics. We read: "...when man finally establishes himself as the immortal indweller of the cosmos and the custodian of his knowledge, he does not see anything as alien. In such a state he is not one embodied person looking upon another as a stranger, he is the self of all and he recognizes it." (p.50). However, one should keep in mind that these verses are appropriated in the context of meditation as tools, and to that extent they are interpreted with disarming clarity. But in the end, perhaps, one is left with the vague feeling that much of the poetry of the original is lost in the process of interpretation. It is only the intellectual perspicacity of Nitya Chaitanya Yati that saves the entire commentary from lapsing into mere "interpretation."

The book is well produced, the proof reading has been excellent. and I am sure it will serve its cause well as being a collection of guidelines to meditation.

—Dr S. Murali
Before the advent of electric flour mills the domestic grinding wheel or stonemill was a familiar, indispensable, indigenous household gadget and it still has a unique place in homes in many parts of the country. The authors have brought out a well-researched monograph on bhakti or devotion with the stonemill and its usage as the background. The book is based on a thesis presented at a seminar at the famous Sorbonne University in France and spans the past seven centuries although, according to the authors, the practice of singing while grinding flour can historically be traced to the sixth century. In an introductory chapter they describe the stonemill and the raw materials and craftsmanship required for its manufacture. It is followed by fourteen chapters, divided into three parts, mostly giving English translations of numerous distiches in Marathi language assiduously gathered from 131 villages in Pune District of Maharashtra.

The peasant women of these villages have customarily been at work with their stonemill in the early hours of the morning, with little or nothing to disturb them, which is therefore an ideal time for metaphysical or mundane reverie, as seen so well from their distiches. The stonemill-songs portray the wide emotional spectrum of the women — their hopes, aspirations, fears, traumas, family bonds and devotion to God with the stonemill as their intimate but humming companion in whom they can safely confide. The book contains many complimentary as well as complaining references to the hackneyed mother-in-law/daughter-in-law syndrome, as reflected in these distiches. Episodes from the lives of some well-known saints, including Janabā, Kabir and Nāmdēv, are briefly narrated. The quotation of Nāmdēv's abhang meaning "reduce your needs as the samsara always remain unsatisfied, that is to say, stand as onlooker of your mental propensity, vritti, and remain steadily fixed in a state of conjunction with your own form, svarūpa-nusamdhan" echoes Sri Ramana Maharshi's teaching.

The stonemill is the central theme, the pivot around which the authors spin off a vast multitude of their concepts and fancies, interlaced with facts, while commenting on the distiches. Apparently the book is to a great extent a literal translation from French, with elaboration of the same ideas in several chapters, which could have been avoided by more selective condensation and editing. This has resulted in odd or obscure expression of some words, such as 'sacred' and 'intentionality'.

Each chapter closes with a list of references. Two area maps are annexed and eighteen excellent colour pictures are reproduced at the end of the book.

—Dr. T. Sankaran


This small commemorative volume marks the occasion of the laying of a foundation stone by the Dalai Lama for the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, which is to be built in Auroville. It includes talks by the Dalai Lama, an interview with him, a discussion on alternative education and background information. It shows that the work at Auroville is creative, continuing and expanding. It does not detail how this new pavilion will be paid for or what it will cost.

The talk by the Dalai Lama is concerned with global problems and universal values. These values are centered on love, compassion and calmness of mind. He makes the point that these are important for all, theists or atheists. At every stage of life we depend on the compassion of others. A calm mind contributes to health and can be developed. Says the Dalai Lama, "Each individual human being has in him self the potential or seed of these good qualities. The question is whether we want to make the effort or not... We can change our minds through mental training, just as we train our physical bodies" (p.20)

The Dalai Lama comes regularly to South India to visit the Tibetan refugee communities in Karnataka. He is less often in Tamilnādu.
Hopefully this new pavilion in Auroville will be a focus for mutual enrichment through practical and cultural exchange.
—Sunyata

CITTA VIVEKA: The Teachings From The Silent Mind. Pp. 140

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS: Pp. 73


Originally the material of these excellent books had been serialised in the issues of The Middle Way, selected from the Dhamma talks by Ajahn Sumedho given at meditation retreats. “The gift of Dhamma surpasses all other gifts,” and these teachings compiled in their present form are for the purpose of free distribution. In Buddhism theory and practice are not alien to each other, one’s scope of interest and attention is not enmeshed in dogmas.

For example, the title ‘Citta Viveka’ which means ‘The mind of non-attachment’ is also the name for Chithurst Buddhist Monastery. The book speaks for itself and brings the image of citta viveka across to those who had not seen the monastery or heard the teachings. The Venerable Sumedho says, “All that is ignorant is born and dies, it is bound to die — that’s all. It is caught in the cycle of death and rebirth. And if you die, you will be reborn. You can count on it. And the more heedlessly you lead life, the worse the rebirth.” Attachment ends with sorrow. Letting go of desires in whatever form or function leads to the Eight-fold path. When you have the practice complete, you are complete yourself. You can move beyond this existence, the universe of time and space.

The second of these books The Four Noble Truths introduces us to a basic understanding of the Dhamma. The Buddhist practitioner intent on pursuing his search finds a particular joy in this mature teaching and picks out the undeniable spiritual truth. He gains insight into the triple characteristics (anicca, dukha, anatta) attributed to samsara and tightens his focus on the inner quiet.

A very attractive description of the Theravadi method of developing concentration is put forward by the author in Mindfulness: The Path To The Deathless: “Concentration is where you put your attention on an object, sustain your attention on that one point (such as the tranquillising rhythm of normal breathing) until you become that sign itself, and the sense of subject and object diminishes.” Ajahn Sumedho interviewed by Roger Wheeler demonstrates the reality of monastic life and the intricacies of the Vinaya discipline. These truths portrayed with clarity and compassion in the words of Ajahn Sumedho may uplift and inspire the minds of people who have the inclination and aptitude for doing the practice seriously.

—R. Ramasami


This is a collection of writings and lectures put together as a book by Fr. Pieris, a Sri Lankan Jesuit with a PhD in Buddhism, to examine the perceptions which Christianity and Buddhism have of each other as well as how they interact. More specifically, it examines the way that Christianity, seen as a religion in which Love (agape) predominates, meets the religion of Wisdom or inner knowledge (gnosis) which is Buddhism, though it emphasises that both religions contain their own gnostic and agapeic elements.

Indeed, the twin themes of Love and Wisdom run in complementary strands throughout this dense and intricately woven work, that inseparable pair we know so well as Self-Enquiry and Devotion. It is interesting to trace these underlying twin themes, affirming, as they do, Arthur Osborne’s observation that advaita and pure, unadorned Buddhism are one and the same.

It begins by noting that whereas in the West the World religions are studied, in the East they are practised. The West's historical
perception of the East is briefly rehearsed, as is Marco Polo’s journey to Sri Lanka in 1293, after which he said of the Buddha: “Had he been a Christian, he would have been a great Saint of Jesus Christ”. Buddhists have been similarly condescending in saying of Christ that he might have been a bodhisattva, meaning, in this context, one who did not quite achieve Buddhahood. Marco Polo also noted that the life of the mediaeval Saint Joasaph as told in the Church’s Lives of The Saints (Vitae Patrum) bore a remarkable resemblance to that of the Buddha. When it was later discovered that this Saint was in fact none other than the Buddha, he was quietly dropped from the Church’s calendar! Each side has been equally guilty in its misconceptions and misrepresentations of the other.

There is a wide-ranging exploration of these misconceptions and misrepresentations, as well as of the complementary areas and the common ground shared by both religions. It is full of interesting facts and insights, though one has to work very hard to enucleate them, to use one of the Author’s words — dig them out! There is an interesting chapter summarising the basic tenets of Buddhism and its organization. The way the aggressive, missionary Christianity of the colonial era evoked a protestant and unattractive form of Buddhism, a form by which it came to be known in the West, is intriguingly dealt with. Another chapter describes and comments on the relationship between the Buddhist religion and State, particularly in Sri Lanka. It also suggests how the relationship between the two politico-religious systems could be improved, notably in the area of mixed marriages.

It is a book written by an academic for academics. It is very difficult to read. We are provided with an extensive glossary of Buddhist, mainly Pali, terms, but one is also needed for the many long and obscure English words which are used. Fr. Piers never hesitates to use a few long words where one or two short ones would do! Some of these words — enucleate, kerygma, hermeneusis, kenosis — I had frankly never heard of. Reading this book is like listening to General Alexander Haig explaining himself at a Press Conference. It would have been more coherent, I feel, had it been written as a book rather than as a collection of articles and addresses. Why, if the Author has something valuable to communicate, which he has, could he not do so in plain English that everyone could understand?

—Alasdair Black


This important book is a documented survey of the dishonesty of historians, politicians and journalists in their handling of Hindu and Muslim issues. There is a desperate anxiety to pamper the latter and win elections with their votes. The poison called secularism is consistently put forward as a kind of panacea, a parama oushada for the numerous ills of India. It is totally forgotten, and deliberately so, that secularism is the one thing which will keep alive communal antagonisms. The Muslims of India enjoy all the rights that any body of people can ever ask for in the spheres that matter. But the demand, sustained during the days of the British Raj by the latter’s anxiety to prolong their rule, is not for equal rights but for privileged treatment. The Muslims of India today are descendants of those who sacrificed, under unspeakable compulsions and threats, their ancestral faith and religion, to keep barely alive! This tragic fact of Muslim imperialism in India is sought to be concealed just as bribery made several historians of the Hitler Raj in Germany make light of the horrors which rained on that wonderful country. The Holocaust which claimed millions of lives of the Jewish community is hardly at all referred to. Even so Indian historians don’t mention the facts of the oppression of India when the Muslims ruled with ‘blood and iron’ in a disintegrated India. Marxist historians have not the faintest respect for facts or the truth. When they speak of the peaceful period of Muslim rule in India, they are shamelessly ignoring the real truth about that period. Aurangzeb got his own brother Dara Shikoh killed
because the latter showed, what to Aurangzeb seemed a pernicious curiosity about the fundamentals of Hinduism. Aurangzeb has many despicable successors in India. They can be found in the ranks of the secularists nearly all of them either Marxist atheists or unscrupulous opportunists seeking political power by bamboozling a largely illiterate and superstition ridden Muslim community. Muslim leadership both political and religious, is bent on keeping the community in a condition of medieval backwardness and ignorance merely because that is the price of leadership. Jinnah abandoned his Westernised intellectual culture for fundamentalist Pakistanism because that was the key to power. Today's 'secularists' of the Hindu community are prachchanna Muslims and are the real pariahs of Hindu society for they have set themselves up as sworn enemies of Truth. One fears however that Konraad Elst is speaking largely to the incurably stone-deaf. Tolerance in the sphere of religion should not mean sufferance of falsehood and the sustenance of it for building up one's political fortunes. Let these specimens of sheer unscrupulousness beware. Truth will out. It will not long stay concealed or suppressed by University Professors who are just political careerists masking their ambitions with the cloak of historical objectivity.

The book under review is a thoroughgoing exposure of this and other frauds. —Prof. S. Ramaswami.

TANTRIC YOGA AND THE WISDOM GODDESSES: by Dr. David Frawley, Morson Publishing, P.O. Box No.21713, Salt Lake City, U.S.A. pp.256, $16.95. Also Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110007. Rs. 175 / Rs.75 (cb/pb)

David Frawley, the author of this book, is a learned exponent of the ancient Vedic philosophy of India and its appurtenant disciplines of Ayurveda, Yoga and Tantra. He is presently the Director of the American Institute of Vedic Studies at Santa Fe in New Mexico. The inspiration for writing this book came to him from the manuscripts of Kāvyakantha Ganapati Sāstri, who was closely associated with Ramana Maharshi.

Yogic practices are now drawing increased attention from the westerners. The stress and strain of modern life drive them to seek avenues of understanding and peace. Stress has a predominant mental dimension, while strain is mostly physical. Mind and body have both to be disciplined to facilitate one's ultimate realisation of the Truth. Tāntrism is usually projected as a complicated ritualistic path towards this end. A general impression has also been created that sexual practices, sometimes bordering on the perverse, are an integral part of the Tāntric path. This impression, which is a misconception, has tended to keep Tāntriks as an esoteric group, shunned by the traditionally religious and spiritually inclined people.

The author has debunked this misconception by brilliantly expounding the deeper aspects of Tāntric practices. He has clearly brought out how Tāntrism implies a comprehensive approach towards self-realisation by the integrated practice of mantra, ritual, pranāyama and meditation.

The book is divided into three parts. The first describes the core elements of the Tāntric system and the rationale of its rituals in their true form. The second describes in detail the forms of ten Goddesses (Kāli, Tāra, Bhuvanēshwari, Tripura Sundari and others) mentioned in Hindu lore, along with the chakras and rituals of their worship. The third part deals with yogic practices relevant to Tāntrism and describes how they help the development of Tejas, Prāna and Ojas which are inherent in every person. References to astral body in this part would make the reader recall comparable perceptions in Theosophy. The first and third part may be read together to get an insight into Tāntrism. The author points out therein that worship of God or Goddess does not mean propitiation of the Divine outside of ourselves through prayer and ritual but is an exercise to unite with the Divine as one's innermost being. However, the second part, which deals with forms and rituals and frequently refers to the aspect of propitiation...
tion, may be of interest only to the conventionalists among the seekers of Truth.

The author rightly emphasises that "yogic practices are part of a subtle science and technology to develop and harness latent higher powers behind the mind-body system. Meditational practices are meant to take us out of our ordinary consciousness, to free us from the idea of the reality of the external world, and to dissolve the ego."

We all face many obstacles in our attempts to pursue the spiritual path. Attachment to material and physical aspects of life, including sex, hinders us frequently. The author points out that in the Tantric approach we work our way forward through the obstacles instead of denying or avoiding them. At the same time he warns us against taking this path without direct guidance from a genuine guru. An unguided essay into this area may secure for us some extra powers initially but would leave us stranded there without realisation of God-head.

The mis-spelling of 'Goddess' in bold letters on the cover page of this impressive publication has been set right in its Indian re-print.

This is an excellent book which would greatly help in disciplining and guiding the mind-body complex on its spiritual journey.

—C.V. Narasimhan


Bhavāni Nāma Sahasra Stūthi belongs to the Rudrayamaia Tantra and is one of the small treatises that forms the non-duality portion of the Śākta tradition. The original Sanskrit text contains one-thousand names of Bhavāni, the Supreme Goddess. It is considered to be a revealed scripture and an index to traditional Śākta doctrine which is closely related to the Trīka system of Kashmir Saivism. Professor Kamal states that "The Śākta school holds Advaita as the ultimate reality in the same strain as do the monistic Saiva of Kashmir and the Advaita Vedānta propounded by Ādi Sankara. In the Śākta doctrine, however, Divine Motherhood predominates." Professor Kamal states that the purpose of the Bhavāninamamahasrasrūthi is to intelligently and gracefully reveal to aspirants of intense devotion and love the esoteric formulae through which the Divine Qualities of Mother Goddess may be known. For this purpose the Śrī Rāmakrishna Ashrama in Srinagar requested Professor Kamal to prepare an accurate edition of the scripture with relevant interpretations and elaborate commentary of Bhavāni's sacred names. English reading aspirants of the Śākta tradition will find the edition especially valuable.

Professor Kamal's introduction includes valuable information about Divine Mother worship, historical background, other stōtra literature, the Bhavāninamamahasrasrūthi's source, theme and purposes. The original Devanagari literature is given for the purpose of daily chanting and recitation. The main part of the book contains each name in Sanskrit and English transliteration together with lucid translation and detailed explanation for each name. For the purposes of indepth study, multiple meanings as well as the spiritual, religious, mythical and philosophical significance for each name, grammatical derivations of terms and resolutions of apparent paradoxes and contradictions are provided along with numerous quotations and references from the Vēdas and Tantras. The main part concludes with a list of names in Sanskrit. The book concludes with a Sanskrit list of names repeated in the scripture, and similar names found in the Lalita and Gayatri Sahasranāma scriptures.

The relevance of the thousand names is to expound and personify the universal character of the Divine Mother Goddess principle — symbolically, philosophically and practically. The names depict the deepest potency of the Supreme Deity on Earth and beyond. The scripture itself has been traditionally declared to be a means for the realization of the Absolute Truth.

The mantric sounds and beauty of Bhavāni's thousand names made the book difficult for the reviewer to put down. It is full of Divine passion, intelligence, clarity, and reveals many yogic secrets. This reviewer heartily recommends this
volume as a reference book for any first quality library. Students of the Eastern traditions and aspirants of the Sakta tradition will undoubtedly receive great benefit by partaking of its wisdom as a disciplined sādhanā for study and worship.

—Chandrashekhar (A. Roy Horn)


This is a collection of talks given by Vanamāli. The talks are on the eighteen chapters of the Divine Gospel Bhagavad Gītā and the relevance to the modern technological society.

The talks clearly reveal the uniqueness of Gītā as compared to other sacred scriptures. The Gītā is more relevant now when science and technology which are well advanced do not offer solutions to the various problems of humanity. Gītā gives the method for the evolution of God-man who having emptied himself of the ego becomes an instrument in the hands of the divine and who alone can contribute to the upliftment and welfare of the world.

Swāmī Krishnānanda of The Divine Life Society has praised the author's attempt to introduce Gītā in a systematic manner to the common man and commends that this is a good text for a detailed study of the Gospel. There cannot be a better opinion than this.

—N.S. Krishnan


Sudhākār S. Dikshit's 'Journey Towards Nothingness - A Personal Quest' is the encapsulated version of a travelogue. It tells of the high points and the crises in the questing of a literary, philosophical mind. The questions that occur to all of us — what is this soul, why do I suffer etc. — in the life of Mr. Dikshit served as signposts to awide ranging exploration of the underlying truths of life.

Pious attitudes and (dogmatic) philosophical outlook arise often from roots of personal tragedy or affliction. To the contrary Mr. Dikshit [the well known publisher of Frydman's I Am That, and a disciple of Nisargadatta Maharaj] — both of which are not alluded to in this book] was a free spirited and daring thinker, a heretic in some ways, whose inquiry led him to deeply cogitate on the experiences of the seers and philosophers of Ancient India as well as those of the West. 'I have no Guru and I do not believe in Gurudom'. And elsewhwere, 'I do not believe in God in any form whatsoever ... God who can be known by the mind is not God, but a mere mental creation ... one cannot find God anywhere if one does not find him within one's self. The Upanishad says that God exists everywhere and all things exist in God. Pascal said God is a circle with its centre everywhere and circumference nowhere. And from scholarly erudition to compelling personal sharing, in one breathless moment: 'God being totally beyond my reach, and religion and philosophy, as known to me, having failed me, I took to meditation but soon discovered I had resorted to something which is a sort of pretense ... I stumbled upon certain old perceptions of pain or pleasure ... (which) seemed to have arisen of mind's own sensorial cognitions only. I could never catch myself without those perceptions.'

Slipping sideways into this journal are personal asides, commenting on the times — observations salted with the seasoning of years and sound common sense, or occasionally a trenchant view on a personal dislike — which only serves to make the whole narrative more humanly endearing.

This is the diary of a scholar, a man of truth, who in the evening of his life must resolve the conflict between all he has learnt and the insistent knock of the great leveller, Death, who is at his door. This is a subconscious theme which lends poignancy to the erudition displayed throughout the book. In as much as a travelogue is a personal account of a journey, of interest to those who can and wish to see the places trod by another through his/her eyes, this is a book for those with the wish to delve into the diary of a traveller speaking of his long traverse from close on journey's end.

— R. Rajeshwan

This remarkable little book is the outcome of a 6-day Conference in which the author leads the participants step by step along the way of the genuine enquirer searching for truth and the meaning of life. She does not minimise the cost or the vigilance that is required to die the death to the "I" of our needs, our drives, memories that chain us and the mind that dominates all that we do. This has to go in order that we may live in the light of truth, of love and compassion without attachments and desires pulling us this way and that. We have to learn how to move toward the still centre of our being, where division and fragmentation fade and silence and stillness take over.

This is no ordinary book, it has been wrought out of the fiery furnace of one person's response to life experience. The inner authority flames out that we too, as she, may catch fire and burn up all the dross that is ours. If one is prepared to pay the cost, transformation will take place, and the mystery and wholeness of life unfold. It is not a matter of words, thinking how to do this. It is opening ourselves to encounter and meeting, losing our foothold, going along an unknown track and having the courage to surrender ourselves to this process.

In a beautiful passage Vimala Thakar describes the nature of the true guru, not one who teaches, at whose feet we sit and whose disciple we become. It is an egoless encounter beyond that of human relationship. When one comes to the point where one cannot live without the encounter, without touch of the meaning of Life, the reality of Life, she says, Life responds, that is when we have allowed the mystery and wholeness of life to work within us. For no genuine enquirer has ever remained without a Guru. Meeting takes place and the transmission happens. It is a state of being. Guruhood is a state of being vibrating in the life of a person. A candle is lit and the candle burns, gives light wherever its destiny takes it.

This is a book for our day where society and individuals are lost in the maze of materialism, consumerism and all the "isms" that draw us away from the underlying wholeness of life, the interrelatedness of being within the divine sphere.

—Bridget Mary CSMV

BOOKS RECEIVED


THE ELEMENT BOOK OF MYSTICAL VERSE: ed. By Alan Jacobs. Pub: Elemart Books, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 8BP. Pp532, $39.95, Pds.24.99 [A unique collection reflecting the recent impact of Eastern mysticism on the Western world. Order of poems broadly chronological and thematic, and includes translations from different religious traditions. The compilation is free of those authors and classics that are all too familiar, and will appeal to many from different backgrounds who are interested in this vital field of enquiry].


RAMANOPANISHAT. (Telugu rendering of Prof. K. Swaminathan's English Garland of Guru's Sayings part 3) by D. Venkayya, Sri Rama Trust, 21-10/5-49, Teacher's Colony, Mutyalaampadu, Vijayawada 520011.


CATHOLIC ASHRAMS;

Celebration of 118th Jayanti of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

At the Ashram
(13-1-1998)

The celebration of the 118th Jayanti of Sri Bhagavan was organised at the Ashram in the usual, elaborate manner. The Ramana Auditorium decorated with flowers on a massive scale, wore a festive look.

During the entire period of dhanumasa, corresponding to the Tamil month of margazhi (December-January), a special programme is gone through at the Ashram. In addition to the usual pujas a special puja is done in the early hours (between 4 A.M. and 5 A.M.) during which a verse each from Andal’s Tiruppavai, Manickavacakar’s Tiruvembavai and Sri Muruganar’s Tiruvembavai on Sri Bhagavan are sung before harati. Group recital of Vishnu Sahasranama follows (between 5 A.M. and 5.30 A.M.). Sri Bhagavan’s Jayanti comes off in Margazhi and hence these programmes are integrated with the Jayanti celebrations.

Group singing of hymns in Tamil on Sri Bhagavan commenced at 5.30. This was followed by the usual brief puja at seven (during which milk is offered as naivedya to Sri Bhagavan and distributed to devotees). Devotees were then served breakfast.

The next programme was the chanting of the Maha Narasayana Upanishad, which commenced at eight. After Mahanyasa Ekadasa Rudrabhishekam, puja to Sri Bhagavan was performed. The Ramaneswara Mahalingam was decorated with specially made garlands. Harati, the finale came off at eleven.

This was followed by feeding of devotees and visitors. The poor were fed on a large scale. To cope up with the task of feeding a large number of sadhus the extra space available in the west end of the Ashram was made use of this time.

The Amritavarshini Group, Bangalore, led by Srimati Sakkubai Srinivasan gave a rendering of devotional music between three and five in the afternoon.

The Ramananjali Group, Bangalore, led by Srimati Sulochana Natarajan gave a rendering of Ramana music after dinner.

At appropriate intervals during the proceedings Sri Kattimedu Pichalappa and party gave a renditon of high quality nagaswaram music.

At Madurai

Ramana Kendram, Madurai under the leadership of its President, Sri. S. Guruswamy organised a four day celebration between 10-1-98 and 13-1-98. The functions upto the third day were held at the Gujarati Samajam Auditorium. On January 13 the function was held in the premises of Sri Ramana Kendram.

Speeches were delivered by Dr. G. Velan, Syndicate Member, Madurai Kamaraj University, Dr. T.N. Pranatartiharun, Dr. Kala Rani and Dr. V. Niranjan.

Devotional music was rendered by Srimati Jaya Rajamani and party, Srimatis Saroja Santanam, Bhuvana Sudarsan, Kamala Krishnamurthy and Selvi Lakshmi.

The chanting of Upanishads by Vedic students and feeding of the poor were the special features of the celebration on January 13. Films on Sri Bhagavan were also screened.
Release of Sri Ramana Maharshi Commemoration Stamp by the President of the Union of India at New Delhi

At a brief but impressive function held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, Sri K.R. Narayanan, President of the Union of India, released a commemoration stamp issued by way of homage to Sri Bhagavan, on the evening of April 14, that is, on the forty-eighth anniversary of his Brahma Nirvana.

Among the distinguished guests were: Sri R. Venkataraman, former President of India, Srimati Janaki Venkataraman, Sri Madan Lal Khurana, Union Minister for Tourism and Parliamentary Affairs, Sri T.N. Chaturvedi, Member of Parliament and Sri A.R. Natarajan, President, Sri Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore.

The President hosted a tea party in the lawns of Rashtrapati Bhavan. He spent some time in informal conversation with the devotees.

Pointing out that Sri Bhagavan is the Maha Purusha of India, Sri Khurana drew pointed attention to the fact that even by his silent but powerful presence, Sri Maharshi cleared the doubts of many a devotee. He was a universal master who attracted a variety of seekers belonging to different religions.

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At a colourful function held at the Ashram on the evening of April 14, Sri Rambhad, Chief Postmaster General Tamilnadu Circle, presented a copy of the album containing Sri Ramana Maharshi commemoration stamp to Sri Pichandi, Honourable Minister for Housing, Govt. of Tamil Nadu. He presented another copy of the album to Sri Ramanananda of Sri Ramanasramam. The commemoration stamp had been released a little earlier in the day by the Union President, Sri K.R. Narayanan, at New Delhi.

In his welcome address, Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President pointed out that Arunachala Hill always had the mysterious power of drawing saints to itself. He thanked Sri Pichandi, Honourable Minister of Housing, Govt. of Tamil Nadu as well as Sri Siva Suryan, District Collector and Sri Rambhad, Chief Postmaster General, Tamil Nadu Circle for having readily responded to the invitation of the Ashram, requesting their presence.
In a moving tribute to Sri Bhagavan the Honourable Minister observed that it was on account of Sri Maharshi that the whole world came to know about the greatness of Arunachala. His austere, simple life and unique spiritual teaching were a great source of inspiration. His profoundly humanitarian approach could be understood by his instituting the system of feeding of the poor at the Ashram, on daily basis, even from its earliest years. Another unique feature of his life was his compassion even for those who gave trouble to the Ashram. He treated these brickbats as bouquets!

The District Collector and Chief Postmaster General also spoke, paying tribute to Sri Maharshi.

It may be pointed out here that a commemoration stamp on Sri Maharshi was released exactly twentyseven years ago — on 14 April 1971. Similar functions had then been held at Delhi and the Ashram.

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**Sivaratri Celebration at The Ashram**

The first day on which Lord Siva himself took the strange form of the mountain-linga called Lord Arunachala, was Arudra. In month of Margali. And that day when Lord Vishnu and the devas worshipped Him, From out of the effulgence taking birth, Was Siva Ratri in the Masi month.

This is (a translation of) one of the verses translated into Tamil by Sri Bhagavan from the Purana, which explains the importance of Arunachala.

Sivaratri is observed in a solemn manner at the Ashram. There are four special pujas during the night (preceded by abhisheka). Ekadasa Rudra Parayana is also done (before the third puja). This year Sivaratri came off on February 25. As usual devotees kept vigil and went round the Hill. Thevaram recital by Sri Muthiah Oduvar and party in the afternoon was a special feature of the proceedings.

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**Sri Vidya Havan**

This is an annual function which forms part of the worship of Sri Chakra Meru at the Ashram. Conducted on the first Friday of the Tamil month of Panguni the rituals are elaborate and take about ten hours to complete.

This year the havan came off on March 20.

The essential rituals are: navavarana puja, Lalita Sahasranama homa, Lalita Trisati homa, kanya puja and suvasini puja. The materials offered as oblation to the sacrificial fire are: lotus flowers, clarified butter, purasa twigs, sugarcane, chakkarai pongal (sweet rice pudding), dhurva grass, puffed rice, bilva leaves, white mustard and navadhanya.

Purnahuti, the final oblation to the fire is always a thrilling moment. It came off at four in the afternoon.

The function was attended by a large gathering of devotees.

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**Celebration of Birth Centenary of Prof. K. Swaminathan at Chennai**

At a function got up on March 22 in connection with the birth centenary of Prof.K. Swaminathan two books containing selections from his writings and speeches on Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and Mahatma Gandhi were released. These were: Sri Ramana, the Self Supreme and Relevance of Gandhi and other essays.

Dr. N. Markandan, Vice-chancellor of Gandhigram Rural University, presided over the function. He pointed out that the Relevance of Gandhi and other essays contained an interpretation of the spiritual aspect of Gandian thought.

Reverend Father V. Lawrence Sundaram observed that Prof. Swaminathan was “the luminous example of not only academic excellence but of intellectual and moral uprightness.”

Sri V.S. Ramanan, President Sri Ramanasramam formally released Sri Ramana, the Self Supreme. He recalled his life-long association with the Professor and observed that he was the only exponent of both Gandhiji and Maharshi. Apparently Gandhiji’s ideal of service to the masses and Maharshi’s ideal of solitude were contradictory. But really it was not so, as clarified by Prof. Swaminathan.

Sri Ramaswamy, formerly Chief Professor of English, Presidency College, Chennai was presented with the first copy of the book. He observed that “this book is a precious memorial to Swaminathan’s devotion, Guhan’s editorial skill, and to that transcendental ultimate of the spiritual force and power that Bhagavan represented.”

Srimati Sarojini Varadappan and Srimati Soundara Kailasam also spoke on the occasion.

Tributes were paid to the late Sri S. Guhan, IAS (Retd) who did outstanding service in various fields and was in particular responsible for the compilation and publication of these books.
Celebration of Fortyeighth Aradhana of Sri Bhagavan

At Ashram
(24.4.98)

The fortyeighth anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated in the usual, elaborate manner at the Ashram, on April 24. Except for a difference in the choice of Tamil hymns for the group singing early in the morning, the programmes on Aradhana day are practically identical with those on Jayanthi Day.

There were two special programmes on April 23.

A special function was got up at the new dining hall of the Ashram in the evening. This was for the purpose of presenting prizes as well as certificates to winners in the annual Essay/Quiz competition (for students) on the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan, conducted jointly by the Ashram and Ramana Maharshi Centre for learning, Bangalore.

Swami Ramanananda distributed the prizes. Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President, Sri A.R. Natarajan, Dr. Sarada and Sri R. Natarajan addressed the students.

The second programme was an impressive rendering of Ramana music in classical Carnatic style by Smt. Ambika Kameshwar.

After dinner on Aradhana Day devotees had the opportunity of listening to a very impressive mandolin concert by Sri U. Srinivas. It may be mentioned that Sri U. Srinivas has recently been honoured with the title of Padma Shri by the President of India.

Kattimedu Pichiappa and party gave a rendition of high quality nagaswaram music at suitable intervals during the entire function.

Celebration at New York

The Aradhana was celebrated at the Arunachala Ashrama, New York on April 25. There was group singing of Aksharamanamalai, Arunachala Pancharatnam and Upadesa Saram. Sri C.R. Rajamani and Colonel Subramanian spoke on the occasion. Devotees were treated to lunch.

Celebration at Nova Scotia

The Arunachala Ashrama, Nova Scotia celebrated the Aradhana on April 24 with Sri Chakra Puja, recital of hymns and readings from Ramana literature.
Reading of Almanac on Tamil New Year's Day

It is usual practice at the Ashram to read out the predictions etc. contained in the almanac for the ensuing year, on Tamil New Year's Day. The almanac for the New Year *Bahudhanya* was read out at a brief function held at the Ramana Auditorium on the afternoon of April 14.

Readings from Ashram Books

It has been decided to hold brief reading sessions at the Ashram. Important Ashram books will be read out one after the other for a brief period everyday. A start has been made with reading of Suri Nagamma's *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam* on Tamil New Year's Day.

Ramanachala Satsanga, Bangalore

A group of devotees at Bangalore is conducting *satsang* on Sunday mornings (between 9 and 10-30) at:

Ramanachala Satsanga,
Ragottama Smaraka Bhavana,
Third Floor, Sanjaya Nagara,
Bangalore 560 094.

The programme consists of chanting of *Aksharamanamalai* and *Upadesa Saram*, silent meditation and reading of *Talks with Ramana Maharshi* and *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*.

The organisers invite devotees to participate.

Extension to Ashram Dining Hall

Obituary

Prof. K. Subramanian (1929-1998)

Professor K. Subramanian, staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan and well known columnist in *The Hindu* was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on January 11.

His parents Sri Krishnaswami and Saraswati Ammal happened to live in Tiruvannamalai in the mid 1920s and used to visit Sri Bhagavan. Subsequently they moved to Kodaikanal.

He was popularly known as K.S. He and his sisters had splendid opportunities for frequent *darsan* of Sri Bhagavan in the company of their parents. K.S. used to observe, “In our case, we could say we were seen by Sri Bhagavan first. We were conscious of meeting him much later”.

K.S. also used to write letters to Sri Bhagavan even when he was a school boy. During one of his visits to the Ashram, Sri Bhagavan jocularly remarked, “So, you are the person writing letters to me. Does your father send you money so that you can write letters to me?” K.S. could give no reply to this question!

He thus had several opportunities for receiving the grace of Sri Bhagavan. He had the last *darshan* exactly a week before *Maha Nirvana*. He founded the Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad in 1979. Under his inspiring leadership the Kendram has grown substantially.

In spite of his scholarship and immense popularity as a newspaper columnist K.S. retained his strong trait of utter simplicity throughout his life.

Devotees of Hyderabad have benefitted immensely from the impressive talks given by K.S. on the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan. They looked forward to these
talks eagerly week after week. This was his signal service to the devotees of Sri Bhagavan in his last days.

S. Kalyanam (1937-1998)

It is with deep regret that we report the death on April 25 of Sri S. Kalyanam, son-in-law of Sri Ramanananda in her purvashrama (husband of Mangalam, his third daughter). He died of a massive heart attack at Bangalore.

He served the Indian Oxygen Ltd., for long years and retired as its General Manager at Calcutta. At the time of his death he was Adviser to PRAXAIR India (Pvt) Ltd., Bangalore.

Sri Kalyanam was well known for his simplicity and cheerful disposition. Residents and devotees will remember him for long.

May his soul rest in Eternal Peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan.

Munagala V. Krishnan

Sri Munagala V. Krishnan — son of Sri Mungala Venkataramiah, (Ramanananda Saraswati) outstanding devotee and compiler of Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi — passed away at Hyderabad on March 16.

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

FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

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<td>VINAYAKA CHATHURTHI</td>
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<td>102ND ANNIVERSARY OF SRI BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT AT ARUNACHALA</td>
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Statement about ownership and other particulars about THE MOUNTAIN PATH according to Form IV, Rule 8, Circular of Registrar of Newspapers for India.

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

Date: 31.3.98

Signature of the Publisher:

(SD) V.S. Ramanan
sound enough, but our worldly experience is an undeniable authority for us. It is our actual experience that the mind does harm to us. It is quite possible to overcome it and make it do good instead.

Innumerable sastras and Vedas have come into being solely for this purpose. When we witness the mind causing harm and countless lives being lost in consequence before our very eyes, nothing is gained by denying altogether (this proneness of the mind to go wrong and the possibility of directing it aright).

That the mind by its nature and owing to bad company does cause misery to the soul is quite clear. It is the common experience of yogis that through good company and proper training it is possible to make the mind an ally.

That all actions are God’s actions is a general truth; the Truth Supreme. Yet man does have sufferings. That all are manifestations of God is parama satya. Yet we do see with our eyes the suffering of human beings.

That is to say, all things are the same for God. If millions of lives are lost it makes no difference to Him. Far corners of this universe fly apart. Whole countries are wiped out by earthquakes.

Suns collide with each other and disintegrate into particles. And these reappear in ever new forms in millions.

Millions? One million? Million million? Million million million? Sextillion? Duodecillion? No. Infinite, beyond all counting. Yes, countless beings perish every moment. It is all the same for God. Movement is the manner of His being. It is the nature of this world, His body, to keep revolving. Yet, He has no movement, no death.

God is everywhere. He is ever present, He is everything. Yet we see that individual lives have pleasure and pain. True it is that through ajnana living beings bring misery on themselves. True also that in reality they have no evil and no suffering.

But this ajnana is an evil, is it not? Has it not to be removed? Controlling and overcoming the mind simply means removing ajnana, nothing else.

‘But is not ajnana also God? Why destroy it?’ If someone were to ask thus, then our reply would be:

‘When you realize that all is God — jnana is God; ajnana too is God — when you realize this, then you have attained true jnana, you have shed your ajnana. It is true that ajnana and the consequent suffering are all God’s doings; but don’t forget that the removal of ajnana and your attaining jnana and bliss are also God’s doings. And don’t grieve over the exit of ajnana.’

How does one worship God? Krishna says, “I am the Father of all. All movement originates from me. The wise who know this worship me.”

Anyone who causes harm to a living being cannot be a true bhakta. Anyone who has enmity towards another living

\[ Gita. X.8. \]