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

— The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1

June 1999 Aradhana Issue Vol 36, Nos. 1 & 2

1 The Nature of Bliss — Editorial
9 Maharshi Ramana — Prof. K. Swaminathan
13 Srimad Bhagavata
16 Sri Ramana’s Universal Love — G.S. Sharma
22 Manikarnikashtakam — Shankaracharya
27 The Quest — K.L. Sharma
38 Sri Ramana Dhyanam — N.N. Rajan
45 Manuscripts of Sri Bhagavan
57 Bhagavan Ramana: His Silent Upadesa — Arthur Osborne
65 The Concept of Matter and Spirit in Sankhya — Dr. H.L. Chandrashekara
71 Siva Puranam — Tr: Prof. K. Swaminathan
76 Ramana Still Lives — Arthur Osborne
78 Pericles, Prince of Tyre — Rosalind Christian
84 Sri Niranjanananda Swami — Viswanatha Swami
88 Therese of Lisieux, the Great Carmelite Saint — Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma
105 The Mystic Poetry of Percy Byshe Shelley — Alan Jacobs
117 Bhagavan Ramana and His Ashram — Ramamani
119 Book Reviews — Compiled and Edited by J. Jayaraman
126 Ashram Bulletin

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— Editor.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
The Nature of Bliss

All of us have a vision of the future, at least in a rough sense. We may not have a clear or imaginative perception of the times to come. But we do form certain concepts or a mental picture, all the same. On this basis, hopefully, 'tomorrow' would be a better day. By contrast 'today' is dull, lack-lustre. In short, we imagine that happiness always lies round the corner.

Leaders of society and the nation at large are eloquent in talking about the future. For practical, political reasons they make all kinds of pronouncements on the subject and promises as well.

Now, what exactly is meant by a 'better' tomorrow? In ordinary, popular terms, it just means mere money, more and more property and possessions for all. This is because money is normally taken as the index of happiness.

It should, however, be remembered that money is not susceptible of direct utilisation. It has first to be converted into articles of use — food, dress and the like.

That money has no intrinsic worth in itself and will not attract all, is brought out by the replies given by Sri Bhagavan to certain questions put to him (in 1936).

Question: You do not touch money nor other offerings, I trust.

Maharshi: People sometimes place fruits in my hands. I touch them.

Question: If you receive one kind of offering, why should you not receive money also?
Maharshi: I cannot eat money. What shall I do with it? Why should I take that with which I do not know what to do?  

It is also that money or wealth should be utilised properly. Unless one is discriminating and utilises it for good ends, in line with ethical and moral stipulations as well as general propriety, one is apt to take to the wrong path and come to grief. In some contingencies it is evident that the man who has not much money is actually better placed. At least, he has no chance of ruining himself!

We commit an error in associating happiness with material possessions. It is also by error that we imagine we are the arbiters of our own destiny. But the error of errors lies in the assumption that objects outside (of ourselves) can cause or produce happiness within (ourselves). We forget our real nature. By serious introspection we are certain to know the truth that happiness lies within ourselves. It has to be sought only within.

It is usual for people to avoid what causes unpleasantness or inconvenience. For the majority the aim is to be comfortable at any cost. But those intent on spiritual advancement actually court suffering. In all the important religious traditions of the world there are inspiring accounts of seekers undergoing suffering voluntarily in order to achieve spiritual progress and fulfilment.

Stringent fasting, keeping vigil for days on end, foregoing basic comforts like bed and shunning all company — these were a source of joy and never a source of suffering for the Desert Fathers (of the Christian tradition). The Fathers were concerned only with their spiritual aims.

We have reliable accounts of yogis in the Himalayas who subjected the body to extreme discomfort and excruciating pain. For example, certain yogis seemed to have stood on one leg for indefinite periods and practised tapas. This was for keeping up the spirit of vairagya. There are reasons to believe that such yogis still live there.

Sri Maharshi while replying to certain questions of Swami Yogananda has pointed out that suffering is inevitable on the spiritual path:

Yogananda: Why does God permit suffering in the world? Should He not with His omnipotence do away with it at one stroke and ordain the universal realisation of God?

Maharshi: Suffering is the way for Realisation of God.

Yogananda: Should He not ordain differently?

Maharshi: It is the way.

Yogananda: Are yoga, religion, etc., antidotes to suffering?

Maharshi: They help you to overcome suffering.

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1 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 281, p. 259 (1978 Edn.).
Yogananda: Why should there be suffering?
Maharshi: Who suffers? What is suffering?
(There was no reply from Swami Yogananda).  

Normally people derive happiness by acquiring possessions. However the opposite is also true. Sometimes the pleasure derived from renouncing possessions voluntarily or being relieved of them by force is equally great. Even kings acknowledge this. A passage from Shakespeare brings out this point:

King Richard: What must a king do now? Must he submit?
The king shall do it: must he be deposed?
The king shall be contented: must he lose
The name of king? O' God's name let it go:
I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,
My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,
My gay apparel for an alms-man's gown,
My figur'd goblets for a dish of wood,
My sceptre for a palmer's walking staff,
My subjects for a pair of carved saints,
And my large kingdom for a little grave,
A little little grave, an obscure grave;
Or I'll be buried in the king's high way,
Some way of common trade, where subjects' feet
May hourly trample on their sovereign's head;
For on my heart they tread, whilst I live;
And, buried once, why not upon my head?  

In reply to a question as to the nature of happiness, Maharshi points out that this (happiness) is inherent in man:

Maharshi: If a man thinks that his happiness is due to external causes and his possessions, it is reasonable to conclude that his happiness must increase with the increase of possessions and diminish in proportion to their diminution. Therefore if he is devoid of possessions, his happiness should be nil. What is the real experience of man? Does it conform to this view?

In deep sleep the man is devoid of possessions, including his own body. Instead of being unhappy he is quite happy. Everyone desires to sleep...
soundly. The conclusion is that happiness is inherent in man and is not due to external causes. One must realise his Self in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness.

The Sruti records the following dialogue between Maitreyi and Yajnavalkya which took place in times of old and points out that happiness is centred in the Self alone:

Maitreyi: If indeed, Venerable Sir, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal through that?

Yajnavalkya: Like the life of the rich even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth.

Maitreyi: What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal? Tell me that indeed, Venerable Sir, of what you know (of the way to immortality).

Yajnavalkya: ... Verily, not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear; but a husband is dear for the sake of the Self. ... Verily, not for the sake of wealth is wealth dear, but wealth is dear for the sake of the Self. ... Verily, O Maitreyi, it is the Self that should be seen, heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. Verily, by the seeing of, by the hearing of, by the thinking of, by the understanding of the Self, all this is known.

The experience of happiness is common to all. However there is a gradation of this happiness among different classes of embodied beings (starting with men) and this is known from the Sruti.

The different classes of beings in ascending order of importance (planes of existence) are: human beings, manushya gandharvas (fairies, or human beings who have acquired supernatural powers), deva gandharvas (higher order of gandharvas or fairies), pitris (manes), ajanajanatas (gods by birth), karma devas (gods by merit), devas (gods or celestial beings), Indra (lord of celestial beings), Brihaspati (preceptor of the devas) and Prajapati (the God of creation).

The Sruti quantifies the degree of happiness experienced at each of these levels. It says that taking human joy (the maximum of it) as the (basic) unit, the joy at the next step is a hundredfold. Thus, one hundred units of human joy make one unit of joy for manushya gandharvas. This ananda multiplied by one hundred gives the ananda at the next (successive) step or stage — that of deva gandharvas. Proceeding in this manner we come up to the joy at the level of Prajapati. When this too is multiplied by one hundred it gives the measure of the highest joy, the Bliss of Brahman. Strictly speaking, this (joy) is immeasurable.

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5 Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, II.4.5.
6 Taittiriya Upanishad, II:VIII and Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV.iii.33.
Shankara says:

Now when the joy increasing a hundred times at each step reaches its limit and where mathematical differences cease, there being nothing else but the Self to see, hear or think, that is the supreme bliss . . . 7

The Sruti identifies Brahman with Bliss. Badarayana deals at length with the question of Bliss in his Vedanta Sutras. Shankara who provides a complete explanation on the subject in his commentary on these sutras, 8 points out that it is with reference to the Supreme Self alone that the word 'Bliss' is repeated many times (by the Sruti).

He mentions the particular Sruti texts in question:

He is Bliss to be sure. 9

For one (that is, the individual) becomes happy by coming in contact with Bliss. Who indeed would inhale or exhale if this Bliss were not there in the supreme space (within the heart)? For this one indeed delights people. 10

This is an evaluation of Bliss. 11

He attains this Self full of Bliss. 12

The enlightened man is not afraid of anything after realizing the Bliss of Brahman. 13

He knows Bliss as Brahman. 14

Knowledge, Bliss, Brahman. 15

The bliss or delight arising from the knowledge of Brahman baffles all description. It is the highest fulfillment. It is beyond comprehension. That is, it does not come within the scope of the intellect.

In pointing out the truth of the Self however, the Sruti adopts a graded approach. This is evident from various passages of the Taittiriya Upanishad. 16 After adopting the annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya and anandamaya koshas (which are not-Self) as the Self in the earlier stages, the Blissful One, the real Self, is pointed out last.

A doubt may arise as to why the Truth is not indicated even in the first instance. Shankara's explanation is that this is to suit the level of understanding of common people, who cannot grasp the Truth at once.

Shankara draws an analogy between the Arundhati Nyaya and the method followed by the Sruti (in pointing out the truth). A man desirous of pointing out the principal star Arundhati (which is tiny) to another, first shows the adjacent

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7 Commentary on Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV.iii.33.
8 Vedanta Sutras, 1.1.12-19.
9 Taittiriya Upanishad, II.VII.1.
10 Taittiriya Upanishad, II.VII.1.
11 Ibid., II.VIII.1
12 Ibid., II.VIII.5.
13 Ibid., II.IX.1.
14 Ibid., III.6.
15 Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, III.ix.28.7.
16 Ananda Valli (Section II) and Brighu Valli (Section III) dealing with the tapasya of Bhrigu under the guidance of Varuna, his father.
stars which are big and unimportant. These are assumed to be Arundhati at first. Finally he points out the principal star. He then makes it clear that what is pointed out last is Arundhati.

There is a state of unalloyed happiness within the reach of all. This is the state of dreamless sleep. Here, the senses do not function. There is neither the body nor the world. There is neither pain nor suffering. Empirical distinctions are transcended. There are no constraints arising from one’s caste or stage of life. The characteristics, or rather limitations of jivatva, are lost.

However in this state the jīva is enveloped by ignorance. Although capable of experiencing happiness, the jīva cannot express or declare its state of happiness. This experience is proved subsequently — after waking up from sleep — by the declaration of practically all people, “Happily did I sleep; I knew nothing in my sleep”.

Thus there is the ‘reflective cognition of happiness and nescience which were experienced during sleep.’

The Sruti says:

Even as a bird tired of flying about turns towards its nest, restraining its wings, even so the individual soul tired of functioning in the worlds of waking and dream, entering in the state of ignorance, enjoys his own bliss.17

During the time of sleep when everything is resolved, the jīva which is obscured by tamas attains the nature of happiness.18

However, prompted by the force of karma the jīva wakes up from sleep. It gets involved in samsara again.

The Sruti says:

Again, due to conjunction with the karma of the previous life, the same jīva dreams and awakes.19

The state of sleep bears a resemblance to that of the jnani. However there are distinct differences between the ordinary man and the jnani. The jnani abides in the Bliss of Pure Being without any interruption and without any effort on his part.

Sri Bhagavan points out that Reality is beyond the avasthatraya (the three states of consciousness).

He says:

In deep sleep all thoughts disappear and the state of obscurity is one of bliss; there the prevailing body is the anandamaya. These are sheaths and not the core, which is interior to all these. It lies beyond waking, dream and deep sleep. That is the Reality and consists of true bliss (nijnananda).20

Maharshi has cautioned against the possible tendency on the part of the individual to remain in sleep always. He has also pointed out that the sleep state is not fit for efforts to realise the Self.

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17 Paingo Sl Upanishad, 11.9.
18 Kaivalya Upanishad, 13.
19 Ibid., 14.
20 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 619, p. 584 (1994 Edn.).
Maharshi says:

... But one should not therefore desire to be always in sleep. In the first place it is impossible, for it will necessarily alternate with the other states. Secondly, it cannot be the state of bliss in which the jnani is, for his state is permanent and not alternating.

The incentive to realise can arise only in the waking state and efforts can also be made only when one is awake. We learn that the thoughts in the waking state form the obstacle to gaining the stillness of sleep. "Be still and know that I AM God". So stillness is the aim of the seeker. Even a single effort to still at least a single thought even for a trice goes a long way to reach the state of quiescence. Effort is required and it is possible in the waking state only. There is the effort here; there is awareness also; the thoughts are stilled; so there is the peace of sleep gained. That is the state of the jnani. It is neither sleep nor waking but intermediate between the two. There is the awareness of the waking state and the stillness of sleep. It is called jagrat-sushupti. Call it wakeful sleep or sleeping wakefulness or sleepless waking or wakeless sleep. It is not the same as sleep or waking separately. It is atijagrata (beyond wakefulness) or atisushupti (beyond sleep). It is the state of perfect awareness and of perfect stillness combined. It lies between sleep and waking; it is also the interval between two successive thoughts. It is the source from which thoughts spring; we see that when we wake up from sleep. In other words thoughts have their origin in the stillness of sleep. The thoughts make all the difference between the stillness of sleep and the turmoil of waking. Go to the root of the thoughts and you reach the stillness of sleep. But you reach it in the full vigour of search, that is, with perfect awareness.

That is again jagrat-sushupti spoken of before. It is not dullness; but it is Bliss. It is not transitory but it is eternal. From that the thoughts proceed. What are all our experiences but thoughts? Pleasure and pain are mere thoughts. They are within ourselves. If you are free from thoughts and yet aware, you are That Perfect Being.21

There is an indication of the bliss to come in the moment immediately preceding sleep. Similarly the residual impression of the bliss experienced during sleep persists in the moment immediately succeeding sleep. That is why a man who has just woken up from sleep remains calm and collected.

Sri Bhagavan has given instructions as to how these precious moments can be put to use by the serious sadhaka.

Kunju Swami refers to these instructions of Sri Bhagavan in one of his articles on the master.

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He says:

In olden days when we had the benefit of receiving personal instructions from Sri Bhagavan, one of them was to get into meditation before going to sleep. Thus sleep overtook one as a natural sequel to fatigue and was not induced or preceded by lying down. Also, the first thing in the morning, immediately on getting up from bed was to go into meditation. This ensured a serenity of mind and also a feeling of tirelessness throughout the day. The state of mind immediately before sleep is resumed on waking.

In the following dialogue with C.R. Wright, Secretary to Swami Yogananda, Sri Bhagavan observes that Bliss is not something to be got:

C.R. Wright: ... How to get Bliss?

Maharshi: Bliss is not something to be got. On the other hand you are always Bliss. This desire is born of the sense of incompleteness. To whom is this sense of incompleteness? Enquire. In deep sleep you were blissful. Now you are not so. What has interposed between that Bliss and this non-bliss? It is the ego. Seek its source and find you are Bliss. 23

It is certain that he who seeks Bliss will find it. It is ever within. But effort is necessary.

Sivaprakasam Pillai says:

Blessed be the Feet of the One [Sri Ramana] who says that Bliss will surge up and up as one dives deeper and deeper into the 'I'. 24

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22 The Mountain Path, April, 1972.
23 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 106, p. 102 (1994 Edn.).
24 Sri Ramana Pada Malai, Verse 18.
Maharshi Ramana

By Prof. K. Swaminathan

The birth centenary of Ramana Maharshi was celebrated on December 30, 1979. To mark the occasion a special musical programme by Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi along with an explanatory talk by Prof. K. Swaminathan was broadcast by the Madras and Delhi Stations of All India Radio. The talk is presented here along with a translation of the songs (by the Professor).

We are celebrating today the birth centenary of Maharshi Ramana, the outstanding exemplar, in the modern age, of jnana marga or the path of knowledge.

Song in Tamil

By Muruganar

Jnanam peralam
Wisdom we can gain and welfare too; we can dwell for ever in blissful freedom, if only we are governed by the grace of Ramana, the goal of masters of the art of silence.

Sri Ramana attained illumination as a lad of sixteen in July 1896. This was in Madurai, under the shadow of the great temple of Meenakshi Sundareswara. A few weeks later he came to Arunachala or Tiruvannamalai. Here, on and around this hill, he spent four and fifty years, until his mahanirvana in April 1950.

A contemporary of Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo, Maharshi Ramana belonged to the mainstream of Sanatana Dharma and continued the tradition of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. If Ramakrishna spoke of Mother, Gandhiji of Rama and Sri Aurobindo of Krishna, Maharshi Ramana regarded Shiva as his own chosen manifestation of the Divine Being-Awareness-Bliss. The Maharshi therefore represents at its purest the philosophy of advaita, the negation of duality. He is in fact, as Carl Jung says, a true son of the Indian earth, the whitest spot in the white space of Indian monism. Akshara, the spirit imperishable, has to find its empirical home in Akshara, the letter.

So egoless was the Maharshi that he took no pains to establish any dharma or
courtesy: All India Radio
found a new sangha. He was content to lose himself in the vast ocean of our common humanity. As those who have observed him for years have noted, his identification with the poorest of the poor was total and most touching.

He sought no fame. And yet, mature minds, many of them from foreign lands, were drawn to him. Earnest seekers elicited from him some precious works in prose and verse. Great poets like Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri and Muruganar wrote much and well about him, so that we now possess a lovely little library of books by him and on him.

Verses in Sanskrit

By Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

_Ekam Aksharam_

_Akshara_, the imperishable one, shines for ever of its own accord within the heart. How can _Akshara_ be written down?

_Hridaya Kuhara Madhye_

In the interior of the Heart-cavern the one Brahman shines alone as 'I' as the Self (Atman). Resort to the Heart by diving deep within, through Self-enquiry or by subduing the mind along with the breath. You will thus become established in the Heart.

_Deham mrinmaya_

The body is inert like a pot. Since it has no 'I-consciousness' and since, in its absence in deep sleep, we still exist, it cannot be the 'I'. Who is it then that produces the feeling of 'I-ness'? Where is he? In the Heart-cavern of those (who thus enquire and realize), the omnipresent Arunachala Siva shines of His own accord as 'That-am-I' consciousness.

Great things happen when man and mountain meet and the timeless breaks into time. The message of the Maharshi is straight and simple, clear and direct. Turn the mind inward, dive deep into the Heart and discover who and what you are. For modern man whose little warring self is sick and broken and unable to regain its true identity, the Maharshi's message provides the sovereign remedy. The Self Supreme as Awareness and Bliss is available and open to anyone to enjoy here and now.

_Song in Tamil_

By Sri Bhagavan

_Arunachalatililuru_

Those who give up ignorant attachment to wealth, land, kinship, caste and so on, and take refuge at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord of Compassion dwelling in Arunachala, are made ever purer by His grace benign; they are freed from darkness in this world, and, in the steady light of His grace shining like the golden rays of the rising sun, they abide for ever sunk deep in the ocean of bliss.

Indian tradition has, down the ages, played with symbols like the sun and moon, rivers and mountains. Shiva, Rama, and Krishna, the most popular manifestations of Godhead, they too are symbols, symbols that live with a life of
their own. The Maharshi makes admirable use of Krishna as the master of Buddhhi Yoga and of Rama as the model of selfless and heroic action. But the dominant symbol which overpowers him by its mere presence is Arunachala, the Holy Mountain with its tangible suggestion of steadfast permanence and central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation. In retaining a myth, recognizing it as a myth and revitalising it by explaining its meanings, the Maharshi is a typical Indian teacher. To him, as to most unspoilt minds, aesthetic experience and spiritual experience are not only closely related but are at the highest level even interchangeable.

This is illustrated in the story of the song that follows — Arunachala Pancharatnam. One morning in 1917, Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri, the eminent poet, implored the sage to try his hand at a Sanskrit poem and that too in the difficult Arya metre. As the Maharshi pleaded his ignorance of Sanskrit prosody, Kavyakantha explained to him the structure and niceties of this form of verse. A few hours later the Maharshi presented to the astonished scholar these five pregnant stanzas in perfect Sanskrit. This hymn, besides being beautiful, embodies the subtleties of advaita philosophy.

Arunachala Pancharatnam

1. Ocean of Nectar, full of grace,
   O Self Supreme, O Mount of Light,
   Whose spreading rays engulf all things,

   Shine as the Sun which makes
   The Heart-lotus blossom fair.

2. As on a screen a wondrous picture,
   On You, fair Mount, is all this world
   Formed and sustained and then withdrawn.
   Ever as 'I' in the Heart You dance.
   Hence are You called the Heart.

3. He whose pure mind turned inward searches
   Whence this 'I' arises knows
   The Self aright and merges in You,
   Aruna Hill,
   As a river in the sea.

4. The Yogi who, leaving outward objects
   And restraining mind and breath,
   Holds You deep within the Heart
   Sees, bright Aruna Lord, in You
   The light and rises to great heights.

5. He who, with Heart to You surrendered,
   Beholds for ever You alone,
   Sees all things as forms of You
And loves and serves them as none other
Than the Self, O Aruna Hill,
Triumphs because he is immersed
In You whose being is pure bliss.

In the first verse the unity of Awareness as Being and its power as inclusive harmony and mutual relationship are symbolized by the ocean of grace, the mountain, the sun and the heart-lotus, which opened once will never shut again. In the second verse the real Self is exteriorized as the mountain on which maya projects the world-picture, and is again interiorized as the awareness which is bliss. (Shiva dances as ‘I’, ‘T’ in the Heart-space and soars in stillness as Aruna Hill). The third verse describes the method of enquiry, the sadhana in which the sadhaka and the siddha disappear and the Self alone remains. The last two verses assure victory to the followers of yoga, bhakti and karma, because once the ego is dissolved, one sports in the sea of bliss which is one’s true being.

In the Maharshi’s view, the scientific method of Self-enquiry can well go hand in hand with the poetic method of self-surrender. Far from there being any conflict between jnana and bhakti, the two modes of awareness are complementary and reinforce each other.

Murugananar, a great Tamil poet in his own right and an ardent, life-long devotee of the Maharshi, declares in ringing Tamil:

Song in Tamil

Paranalladu
True Seer who sees in all the worlds
Nought but the Spirit Supreme.
He overcame the universe
With nought but inner strength.
A fortress of security
To devotees, his feet,
Nought save their shadow
Is sanctuary for us.

Ramana’s message, with its two ingredients of Self-enquiry and self-surrender, provides a hopeful remedy for the many maladies afflicting modern man. Lakshmana Sarma, the renowned devotee and naturopath, pays this homage to the Maharshi, the mahayogi and master-physician:

Song in Sanskrit

Om Tat Sadakyam
I worship you, O Ramana, whose name is Om Tat Sat, who dwells in the cave of the Heart, who has taken a bodily form to ward off the troubles of devotees.
I worship you, Ramana, who destroys the sins of devotees and gives them all their needs and mukti too.
I worship you, Ramana, whom the humble and the high alike adore.
Who is not enchanted by your form divine?
May your name which ends with Na, destroy all sins. Since in my inner self you dwell, no words can describe you. As Lord of the Self, I worship you.
Maitreya continued:

Barhishad, a great grandson of King Prithu, was well-versed in the ritualistic section of the Vedas and was addicted to the offering of sacrifices on such a lavish scale and in such number that the whole countryside became covered with the kusa blades he had used in them, which earned for him the nickname of Prachinabarhi — he who fills the earth with kusa. Sage Narada in his compassion for the innocent animals which were being so sacrificed, found it necessary to go to him to set him right.

Narada said:

What do you gain, O King, by the ritual you are performing? True well-being consists in the cessation of sorrow and the attainment of happiness, which cannot result from sacrifice. Behold the countless animals you have slaughtered mercilessly who will retain the memory of their sufferings at your hands and will demand vengeance on you.

The jiva enveloped by ignorance dwells in a body for a hundred years and thinks 'I' and 'mine', which gives him trivial pleasure but involves him in all sorts of activities which keep him attached to the modes of prakriti and toss him about from life to life in circumstances high and low, good and bad, to reap pleasure and pain like the hungry dog that goes from door to door receiving a cudgel here and a morsel of food there, as ordained by its destiny. He finds no rest from the known triple affliction whatever for the short-lived relief he gains in one circumstance becomes the precursor of a suffering in the following one, like the load which is transferred from the head to the shoulder, and back again to the head without a lasting relief. As moving from one dream to another does not end the dream, so action does not end action which is the cause of suffering; by knowledge of the Truth alone action ceases.

Therefore, O Prachinabarhi, do not imagine that ritualistic worship can lead to the Real; for it has no relation whatever to it, which is absolute knowledge. Those who view the Vedas as ritualistic

From *Srimad Bhagavata* (condensed by S.S. Cohen), Sri Ramanasramam (1993).
do not know the Vedas: stupid as they are, they do not comprehend the meaning of consciousness, which is their very essence, Lord Janardana Himself. You seem to feel very elated for having performed so many sacrifices which have covered the land with kusa blades and slaughtered such a vast number of innocent animals, though you did not know either the meaning of sacrifice or the wisdom that underlies it. That alone is true sacrifice which pleases Sri Hari, and that true wisdom which places faith in Him and knows His true nature.

You resemble the deer, O King, which, losing itself in the act of copulation with its mate in a scented, sense-bewitching garden, forgets the wolves in front of it and the pursuing hunter behind it. You seek delight in a house full of women, lending your heart and ears to their charming voices and the babble of their children, forgetting the wasted days and nights which are hounding you like a pack of dogs to deliver you to Death the hunter, who is relentlessly pursuing you.

King Prachinabarhi:

I have attentively listened, holy Narada, to these instructions of yours, with which my preceptors in rituals did not seem to be well-acquainted, or else they would have imparted them to me. You have now resolved the doubt which I had always entertained about them. There still remains one single doubt in my mind which I pray you may clear. We are again and again told that the consequences of the actions done in one body are reaped in a future body. How can that be possible, considering the fact that once an action is done it ends there and then — and so must be its results.

Narada:

The jiva performs actions through the mind and reaps its consequences also through the mind. Even in sleep it is the mind which is the real actor when it reproduces in dreams the impressions it has received in the waking state, while the body lies senseless in bed. As the mind carries to the dream state the impressions it gathers in the waking state, so does it carry to another body the karma sown in this one. The thought 'I am so-and-so' and 'This is mine' which the jiva by ignorance makes in respect of a body, he carries with him the karma wrought by that thought to a new body. (Each body is thus determined by the thoughts generated in the previous ones).

In deep sleep, swoon and extreme grief when the senses are suspended (and the body is not perceived), the 'I' sense is also suspended and thus no karma is then generated. Likewise in infancy the variety of forms of the 'I' notion remain subdued like the moon which, although existing, is invisible on the last night of the lunar month. Even though the world of sense does not really exist, transmigration and self-identification with the body will not cease for the jiva which is engrossed by its reality and by the imaginary sense pleasure derived from it, so that (at the moment of death) the thought 'I' and 'mine' brings about the birth of another body (to which he transfers in turn his self-identification), like the leech.
which does not leave its foothold on a straw until it has set it firmly on another.

Therefore liberate yourself, O King, from this attachment to the body and from the external rituals which are made for its welfare, and take to the worship of Sri Hari alone.

(Greatly impressed by Narada's instructions, Prachinabarhi left the kingdom to the care of his sons and retired to Kapila's Ashram at the mouth of the Ganges, where he practised rigorous tapas till he rid himself of all attachments and attained Godhead after death).
Sri Ramana’s Universal Love

By G.S. Sharma

Sri Ramana Maharshi was the embodiment of love and compassion. He treated others as his equals, without any sense of difference. It was not as if such treatment was extended only to human beings. He showed the same consideration to all other living creatures as well, without the least discrimination. In short he was living in total harmony with the whole of creation.

Arthur Osborne recalls the following incident:

Bhagavan would not have snakes killed where he resided. “We have come to their home and have no right to trouble or disturb them. They do not molest us.” And they did not. Once his mother was frightened when a cobra approached her. Sri Bhagavan walked forward towards it and it turned and went away. It passed between two rocks and he followed it. However, the passage ended against a rock-wall and unable to escape, it turned and coiled its body and looked at him. He also looked. This continued for some minutes and then the cobra uncoiled and, feeling no more need for fear, crawled quietly away, passing close to his feet.¹

B.V. Narasimha Swamy’s biography of Sri Bhagavan records another episode:

An incident in Maharshi’s life may be narrated which sets out not merely his powers of endurance but also his readiness to recognize the rights of animals as against himself. Some years ago Maharshi had a long walk downhill from Virupaksha Cave and climbed up through an unfrequented track. Here he passed by a bush in which there was a horns’ nest which he failed to notice. As he passed by it his left bare thigh grazed against it. Before he advanced a few steps the hornets rushed out at him and settled on the same thigh that had disturbed them. They dug into his flesh. “Yes, yes, this is the guilty leg, let it suffer,” said the Maharshi. He did not drive them off, nor did he move away till the hornets left him. He bore the excruciating pain bravely — it was for him to endure the agony in silence. So, bravely enduring the pain, he climbed up and reached his cave hours later, bearing the seal of the hornets’ justice in numerous patches on the thigh.²

Full of remorse for what had happened, he composed the following verse:

When I was stung by hornets in revenge
Upon the leg until it was inflamed,

¹ Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-knowledge, pp. 111-12.
² Self-Realization, pp. 170-71.
Although it was by chance I stepped upon
Their nest, constructed in a leafy bush;
What kind of mind is his if he does not
At least repent for doing such a wrong?3

Vasudeva Sastri recounted another incident, which he had seen:

One day, when we were at Skandashram, I was aghast to find a scorpion climbing up over Bhagavan’s body in the front and another at the same time climbing down his back. I was terrified and wanted to do something. But Bhagavan remained calm, as if nothing happened, and the two scorpions, after crawling over his body as if over a wall, eventually left him. After they left, Bhagavan explained to us, “They crawl over you just as they would crawl on the floor or a wall or a tree. Do they crawl over these sting- ing as they go? It is only because you fear them and do something that they fear you and do something in return.”4

A very interesting incident was once narrated by Sri Bhagavan in reply to Grant Duff who asked the Master if any mongoose had had anything to do with him:

The Master (Bhagavan) said, “Yes, it was the occasion of Ardra and Jayanti. I was living up the hill in Skandashram. Streams of visitors were climbing up the hill from the town. A mongoose, larger than the ordinary size, of golden hue (not grey as a mongoose is), with no black spot on its tail as is usual with wild mongoose, passed these crowds fearlessly. People took it to be a tame one belonging to someone of the crowd. The animal went straight to Palaniswami who was having a bath in the spring by the Virupaksha Cave. He stroked the creature and patted it. It followed him into the cave, inspected every nook and corner and left the place and joined the crowd to pass up to Skandashram. I noticed it. Everyone was struck by its attractive appearance and its fearless movements. It came up to me, got on my lap and rested there some time. Then it raised itself up, looked about and moved down: it went round the whole place and I followed it lest it should be harmed by the unwary visitors or by the peacocks. The two peacocks of the place looked at it inquisitively, whereas the mongoose moved nonchalantly from place to place and finally disappeared into the rocks on the south-east of the ashram”.5

The following are some more reminiscences:

There were two peacocks which used to strut with their feathers spread out like a spangled fan. A cobra too used to take part in this pastime and raised its hood and moved about in their midst.

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3 The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi, p.141.
4 Day by Day with Bhagavan.
5 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, p.85 (1994 Edn.).
Rangaswami Iyengar was once out on the hill. A leopard was nearby. He threw a stone. It turned towards him. He hurried away for his life. Sri Bhagavan met him on the way and asked what the matter was. Iyengar simply said 'leopard' as he was running. Sri Bhagavan went where the beast was and it moved away soon after. All this happened at the time of the plague. Leopards used to roam freely by the side of the temple, sometimes in twos and threes.

The following are the recollections of Akilandammal:

In the Skandashram days the good fortune of taking food with Bhagavan was equally available to birds, animals and human devotees. Bhagavan never distinguished between his human and animal devotees: the same compassion was available to all. At times, it would seem as if his animal devotees were even more fortunate than his human devotees. Laxmi the cow, Valli the dear, Jackie the dog, and the monkey called Nondi Payal (the lame boy) are examples of this.

When Bhagavan first moved to Skandashram Nondi Payal (the monkey named 'lame boy') used to come and eat with us. Although he was given a separate leaf-plate, he usually preferred to help himself to rice from Bhagavan's own leaf. How lucky he was! None of the human devotees ever had the opportunity to share Bhagavan's meal like this.

On one occasion, Bhagavan and the devotees were sitting in a line, waiting for food to be served. The lame boy was seated nearby. After serving Bhagavan, but before I could serve the others, 'the lame boy' took some handfuls of rice from Bhagavan's plate and ate them. Bhagavan only used to take a small quantity of rice, but he was quite happy to share that small amount with the monkey. When I placed some more rice on Bhagavan's leaf to replace the amount which the monkey had taken, the monkey grunted at me in a slightly aggressive manner. Bhagavan at once turned to him and chided him: "Adey, Adey! She is one of our people!" Then it kept quiet. What a perfect sense of equality resounds in those words.

Akilandammal also recollects the following features of life at the Ashram which bring out Sri Bhagavan's sense of equality with all:

Bhagavan never accepted anything which was served to him alone and not to others. Even when medicine was given to him, he would take some and then have the remainder distributed to the devotees who were with him. Not only did he insist that all offerings should be shared, he also insisted that he should not be given more than anyone else, nor be given anything that was of a better quality than that which was given to devotees. Because of this, he would only accept a small quantity of food when devotees insisted on serving him first.

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6 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, p.289 (1994 Edn.).
7 The Mountain Path, April 1988.
Because everyone was aware of this principle, Bhagavan trusted us to distribute the food equally to all, after first giving him a small quantity. However, in later years, when Bhagavan became aware that this principle was not being rigidly adhered to, he insisted that he be served last with whatever remained when all others present had been served.

We have also on record the following statement of Dr. Mohammed Hafiz Syed, Professor of Persian and Urdu in the University of Allahabad, on 3rd January, 1936:

I hesitated at first on arrival. I wondered if I would be permitted to approach you and converse with you. My doubts were soon set at rest. I find that all are equal here. You have established an equality among all. I dined with you and others. If I would say so to my people in U.P., they would not believe it. The Brahmins would not drink water with me, nor chew pan with me. But here you have taken me and others like me in your fold. Though Gandhi is striving hard he cannot bring about such a state of affairs in the country. I am very happy in your presence.

The following is a typical incident recorded by T.R.A. Narayana:

After waiting for some ten minutes and finding that Bhagavan had not come to his seat, Sri Parthasarathi suggested to me that we could meantime go round and see the gosala and other places.

Finishing our inspection we were returning to the verandah by another side, when we heard what appeared to be the voice of a child: “Chee asade (You silly creature!).” We could see no children around, and therefore, peeped to find out the source of the voice. We observed movement among leaves of the brinjal, ladies finger and other plants, in the kitchen garden near the verandah. Looking more intently, we saw a small goat, a little monkey, a squirrel — and Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi! Bhagavan was sitting on his haunches with his legs folded up to his breast. The goat nestled between his knees; the monkey had its head resting on his right knee; the squirrel was perched on his left knee. Holding a packet of paper in his left palm, Bhagavan picked up groundnuts from it with his right hand fingers, one by one, and fed the goat, the monkey, the squirrel, and himself, by turns. His remarks appeared to have been addressed to the monkey which had tried to snatch the nut he was going to place between the squirrel’s lips. As we watched, the four companions went on enjoying the eating. All the four seemed to be equally happy; the way they looked at one another and kept close together was touching. The goat, the monkey, the squirrel and Bhagavan had obviously forgotten their differences in species! And we too looking on, saw all the four

8 The Mountain Path, January 1938.
9 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, p.112-113 (1994 Edn.).
only as good friends despite differences in the forms. No words could describe the feelings which passed through my being at the sight. The vision of the transcendent appeared as a flash of lightning, and revealed to me the essence of being, awareness and bliss, — Sat-chit-ananda."

Even trees were not excluded from Bhagavan's love, harmony and equality. He pronounced that trees too can have Self-realisation. He said, "You may call a tree a standing man, and a man a walking tree".

The following passages from an article would illustrate Sri Bhagavan's sympathy:

Bhagavan once observed a workman rudely chopping the leaves off an almond tree. "Hey, what are you doing?" Bhagavan called out. The workman humbly explained that he was ordered to collect dry leaves for stitching leaf-plates. Bhagavan continued, "you people can do nothing without causing pain. Imagine I grab you by the hair and pull. Your hair may have no life, yet you would feel it."

At the ashram one day, a few unripe mangoes were required in the kitchen. Some workmen were deputed for this. Instead of climbing the mango trees and plucking just the required number, they went about hitting the branches with long sticks. Bhagavan, who was seated in the hall at that time, was disturbed by the sound and sent word through one of his attendants to advise the labourers not to do so. After a while he went out to go for his usual walk. The sight of broken branches and leaves scattered all over the place shocked him. The workmen were still at it.

"Enough of this", he shouted, in a rare display of anger. "How cruel! The trees give us fruits. In return we give them merciless beatings with sticks. Instead, why not cut away at the very roots and kill them once and for all?" How sensitive he was to the pain of the trees!

He once admonished Echammal who was one of his great devotees for collecting one lakh sacred leaves for worshiping her Ista devata in the following manner: "Why don't you go on pinching your own body as many times as the number of leaves required, and complete the puja?" he asked. Echammal was taken aback. "Oh! It would be very painful, Bhagavan!" she replied. "I see", Bhagavan said, "then will it not be painful for the trees too, when you pluck away their leaves one by one?" The lesson went home. She gave up the vratam.

Sri Krishna clearly explains the rationale behind the jnani's attitude of absolute equality towards all:

The yogi by constantly practising concentration of mind sees the self in all beings and all beings in the self and has thus the same attitude towards all.\(^\text{11}\)

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\(^{10}\) The Mountain Path, June 1991.

\(^{11}\) Bhagavad Gita, VI, 29.
Manikarnikashtakam
(Eight Verses on Manikarnika)

By Shankaracharya

Kashi (Banaras), the City of Light and Liberation is situated on the west bank of the Ganga. The long waterfront at Kashi is lined by a number of bathing and cremation ghats. The most important among these is Manikarnika.

1. When on your banks Shiva and Vishnu — both capable of granting union with them and the final liberation as well — were engaged in mutual debate at the time of death of a jiva and Hari (Vishnu) said, “Let this man assume my form” [merge in me] he [thereupon] left the scene. He (jiva) had, by then, the pitambara as his costume and Garuda as his mount [He had himself become Vishnu].

2. When the celestials — Indra and others — are born into the world (falling from their higher world after their merits are exhausted) as human beings, animals, insects and birds and immerse themselves in your waters, O Mother Manikarnika, they are purified, get liberated and become [merge with] Narayana and [like Him] are adorned with the kirita (crown) and kaustuba (gem).

3. Kashi the blessed city which confers liberation has Ganga as its ornament. There stands this Manikarnika which confers happiness. Liberation is but the handmaiden of Manikarnika. When Brahma in the company of the wise ones weighed Svarga Loka (the world of celestials) against Kashi, Kashi remained below on earth, proving heavier. Svarga Loka proved lighter [and stayed above].

4. The entire region consisting of the banks of the Ganga is of unsurpassed holiness. Of this (region) Kashi stands as the best. Of this Manikarnika stands as the very best of the best, where Iswara confers liberation on jivas. This kshetra is hard of access even to devas, and destroys all sins. It is only as a result of the accumulated merits done earlier over many births that the meritorious ones gain access here.

5. The city of Varanasi which confers happiness was created by Brahma who knew that this was the means of coming out of the ocean of misery for all beings who are immersed in it. Even lokas like swarga which confer enjoyment are light — of lesser merit. They only lead man further into the region of enjoyment. Whereas Kashi, the city of Liberation confers unalloyed good fulfilling [aspirations regarding] dharma, wealth and liberation.

1 The debate, presumably, is on the point whether the man after the purificatory effect of a bath at Manikarnika Ghat would merge with Shiva or Vishnu.
6. Vishnu who holds the flute, bears the mountain and is adorned with the Srivatsa (gem) is One. Shiva who wears the Ganga and swallowed the Great Poison is also [the same] One. O Mother Manikarnika! Those who bathe in your waters — they become Rudras or Vishnus. They are many [before liberation], but how can they still be many [and not One] after liberation?

7. Death on your banks is auspicious and this is praised even by devas. Indra is ever desirous of seeing with his thousand eyes such a liberated person who comes along with the Sun who is possessed of a thousand rays. He (Indra) rises from his seat to see whether this meritorious man is Shiva or Vishnu! He wonders which holy abode will he go into?

8. Even the four-faced Brahma who is the teacher of the meaning of the Veda is not capable of describing the merit acquired by performing snana (bath) at the Manikarnika ghat at mid-day, even if he tries over a hundred (deva) years! The one who wears the crescent moon (Shiva) who, by performing yoga has reached its zenith (has the highest merit) makes the soul of the man (whose body lies prostrate at the ghat) merge with Narayana or Shiva!

9. The merit acquired by bathing at Manikarnika is equivalent to the merit acquired by performing crores of pains-taking rituals for removal of sins, as well as aswamedha sacrifices. He who after having his bath, recites this stotra crosses the ocean of samsara as easily as he would cross a small pool of water. He reaches the Abode of Brahman which is all Light!

Sri Ramakrishna’s Vision of Shiva at Manikarnika Ghat

Sri Ramakrishna said:

I saw a tall, white person with tawny, matted hair walking with solemn steps to each pyre in the burning ghat, raising carefully every jiva and imparting into his ear the mantra of Supreme Brahman.

On the other side of the pyre, the all-powerful Mahakali was untying all the knots of bondage, gross, subtle and causal of the jiva produced by past impressions and sending him to the indivisible sphere by opening with her own hands the door to liberation.

Thus did Viswanatha, the divine Lord of the universe, endow him in an instant with the infinite Bliss of experiencing non-duality, which ordinarily results from the practice of yoga and austerity for many cycles. Thus did He fulfil the perfection of the jiva’s life.

— Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, p.565.
GOOD Friday and Easter have a profound symbolism. Joel Goldsmith reminds us in *The Contemplative Life* that the crucifixion of Christ must be taken to symbolise the death of the ego-self. The Maharshi also has given the same meaning to it. Joel compares the ego-belief to a tomb in which we are buried; so the crucifixion is naturally followed by the resurrection. He says, "We must die to the belief that of our own limited selves we are something, that we have lives of our own, a mind, a soul, a way and a will of our own. We are to die to the belief that we have any virtue, any life, any being, any harmony or any success of our own." Everything is summed up in the statement "Not my will be done, but Thine." This holy affirmation is an acknowledgment of our own nothingness and God's Allness. It leads the way to the sublime revelation: "I and my Father are One."

Thus the crucifixion symbolises breaking attachment to this world, killing the ego-self who can be attached. Following that, our higher Self rises from the tomb of ignorance or sin or self-will, triumphing over death.

Another historical symbol of this is the emergence of Saul of Tarsus out of his blindness as "Saul" into the light as "Paul". Then St. Paul could say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." What Jesus called "the Father", — Paul called "the Christ" — that is the Christ-consciousness, the Christ within. Joel Goldsmith says: "A Something walks before us, making the crooked ways straight." If we have this conviction, not only in our mind but in our heart, no material form of protection is necessary. He further says: "Hold steadfastly to the realization of God as the temple in which we live, as the hiding place, the fortress and the rock." And he continues: "I live with God; I walk with God; I acknowledge Him in all my ways. In quietness and in confidence, in the assurance of God's presence; God in me and I in God." With this attitude of mind we are no more of this world, though still in this world.

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2 Galatians, 11, 20.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
Selections from Kalidasa
(The Nandi Slokas)

Malvikagnimitra, Vikramorvasiya and Abhijnanashakuntala are the three plays of Kalidasa, the renowned Sanskrit poet and dramatist, which have come down to us. The nandi slokas of these plays are of profound philosophic import. A translation of these verses is presented below.

**Malvikagnimitra**

Nandi

May the Lord who, although enjoying absolute sovereignty from which result many blessings to His votaries, yet Himself wears an elephant-hide; who, although united in body with His beloved, yet excels the ascetics whose minds are free from [the craving for] sense pleasures; in whom there is no pride, although with His eight-fold forms He sustains the universe — may He remove your state of ignorance, so that you may behold the right way.

**Vikramorvasiya**

Nandi

He who is attainable by firm faith and meditation; who is hailed as the Supreme Spirit in the Vedanta, who is present in and pervades the whole of heaven and earth; to whom alone the name of Lord, not signifying any other being, can be properly applied; and, who is sought within [themselves] by those desirous of salvation by restraining the vital breaths prana and others — may that Eternal One bestow upon you the highest bliss.

**Abhijnanashakuntala**

Nandi

That [entity] which is the first creation of the Creator;¹ that which bears the offering made according to due rites;² that which is the offerer; those two which make time;³ that which pervades all space, having for its quality what is perceived by the ear;⁴ that which is the womb of all seeds;⁵ and, that by which all living beings breathe — these are the visible forms of the Supreme Lord. May He (manifested in these eight forms) protect you!

1 According to puranic accounts water was created first.
2 This refers to the role of Agni who carries the offerings in fire during yagna and yaga, to the respective gods — when this is done according to prescribed rites. (If otherwise — that is when done without observing the rules — Agni simply burns them down).
3 Sun and moon. Day and night, the month, year and seasons — these are all computed with reference to the sun and moon.
4 Ether.
5 Earth.
6 The five vital airs (prana, apana, vyana, udana and samana).
A clear summary of the preceding chapters, together with an introduction to this one, is given by the sage in the following: “Where the ego rises not, there we are That. But how can that perfect egolessness be attained, if the mind dives not into its Source? And if the ego dies not, how can our natural state be won, wherein we are That”? The source of the mind, that from which the mind takes its rise, which is here indicated, is the Heart, which, as we have seen before, is to be tentatively regarded as the own abode of the Self. Of course the absolute truth is that the Self is Itself the real Heart. Here the sage refers to the egoless state as our natural state, because there we are what we really are, namely the Pure Consciousness.

That the ego must be eradicated is the one thing on which, as the sage tells us, all religions are agreed. They differ only in regard to the nature of the state of Deliverance. Once a question was put to the sage: “Which of the two views is correct, — the one that says that God and the soul are one, or the opposite one?” The sage said: “Get to business on the agreed point, namely that the ego must be extinguished”. Hence the essential teaching is that which tells us how to get rid of the ego; all else is of lesser importance. For, what we shall do to win egolessness is far more important than the beliefs, in any, we shall cherish about it, or about the world that keeps us from it.

The author wrote this book under the pen-name ‘Who’.

1 Some of the subjects dealt with in the earlier chapters are: THE WORLD, THE SOUL, GOD and THE EGOLESS STATE.
2 Ulladu Narpadu, verse 27.
3 The Sage Gautama once spoke a parable, in order to discourage questions about the origin of bondage. He said, “Here you are, bound hand and foot by desire and fear, and here is the straight path to Deliverance. You ask questions about how you came to be bound. They are irrelevant. You should be content to know how you can become free. Do not act like the man who died because he raised untimely questions and insisted on getting answers. He was going through a forest. An enemy who was waiting for him in an ambush shot him with a poisoned arrow. Accidentally the wounded man was seen by a friend, who went and spread the news. Soon his kinsmen came to him with all necessary appliances. They wanted to pull out the arrow and apply antidotes to save his life. But the wounded man prevented them, saying ‘You must first inquire and find out all possible details about the enemy, — whether he is of high or low caste, tall or short, fair or dark and so on — and about the arrow and him that made it’. The kinsmen tried their best to convince him that these questions could wait, and that it was urgently necessary to save his life by applying remedies. But the man was obstinate, and precious time was wasted. So he died. Be not like this man. Cease questioning; hear the way to Deliverance, and follow it”.

The Quest
By K. Lakshmana Sharma
The methods inculcated by the diverse religions for Deliverance are all of them right in a way. But the direct method is the one taught by the sage. The other methods just prepare the mind for the right method. They can do no more. The sage explained it thus: "The ego cannot be subjugated by one that takes it to be real. It is just like one's own shadow. Imagine a man who does not know the truth of his shadow. He sees it following him persistently, and wants to get rid of it. He tries to run away from it, but it still follows him. He digs a deep pit and tries to bury it, filling up the pit; but the shadow comes to the top and again follows him. He can get rid of it only by looking away from it, at himself, the original of the shadow. Then the shadow will not worry him. The seekers of Deliverance are like the man in this parable. They fail to see that the ego is but a shadow of the Self. What they have to do is to turn away from it towards the Self, of which it is the shadow".

The first thing to do before beginning the quest is to analyse the ego-sense and separate the real from the unreal part of it. We have seen already that the ego has an element of reality mixed up in it, namely the light of Consciousness, manifest as 'I am'. This 'I am', we know, is real, because it is the part that is constant and unchanging. We need to reject the unreal part, the sheaths or bodies, and take the remainder, the pure 'I am'. This 'I am' is a clue to the finding of the real Self. By holding on to this clue, the sage tells us, we can surely find the Self. He once compared the seeker of the Self to a dog seeking his master, from whom he had been parted. The dog has something to guide him, namely the master's scent. By following the scent, leaving everything else, he ultimately finds his master. The 'I am' or the ego-sense is just like the master's scent for the dog. It is the only clue the seeker has for finding the Self. But it is an infallible clue. He must get and keep hold of it, fix his mind on it to the exclusion of all other things. It will then surely take his mind to the Self, the source of the 'I am'.

The analysis is like the following: "I am not the gross body, because when I dream, another body takes its place. Neither am I the mind, because in deep sleep I continue to exist, though the mind ceases to be, and I remember, on waking, the two features of sleep, namely, the positive one of pure happiness, and the negative one of not seeing the world. As mind and body appear fitfully, they are unreal. I can reject these as not myself, because they are objects seen by me. But as I exist continuously, I am real, as the pure 'I am'. I cannot reject this 'I am', because it is that from which body and mind are rejected. Hence 'I am' is the truth of Me. All else is not I".

We do not thus arrive at the practical experience of the 'I am'. What we gain by this analysis is just an intellectual grasp of the truth of the Self. The Self thus known is a mere mental abstraction. What we need to experience is the concrete presence of the Self. We have seen in the last chapter that to do this we need to break the vicious circle of the three states.
The method by which this vicious circle can be broken is the quest of the Self as taught by the sage.

We may presume that this was the method followed by the sages of the past. In the Upanishadic lore we are told that 'the Self must be sought'. It appears that the method followed by Gautama Buddha was this. But somehow the secret of this method seems to have been lost. For what we find in the books is not this method, but something else, which we shall call the traditional method. We shall first study this latter.

The method is as follows.

First the seeker learns the truth of the Self as given out in the ancient lore, called the Upanishads; these and other books take the disciple through the philosophical inquiry set forth in the foregoing chapters; the Self is shown to be 'not this' and 'not this' and so on — eliminating at each step some one thing that has been taken to be the Self; in this way the gross body, the vital principle, the mind and the ego are rejected; or we are taken through the three states of being and the selves that are experienced in them are shown to be not the Self in his natural greatness; what remains over after all these are rejected, we are told, is the real Self, as well as the Supreme Being, the hypothetical cause and sustenance of all the worlds; we are further told that this Great Being is really unrelated, absolute, formless, nameless, timeless, spaceless, alone without a second, unchanging and unchangeable, perfect, the principle of happiness which filters down into this world and is the cause of all the enjoyment in it.

The next step is for the disciple to reflect on this teaching, especially on the identity of the real Self and the Great Being spoken of, — to consider the evidence for and against it; in doing so he is to remember that the sacred lore is the only evidence he can have of the truth of the real Self, which is supersensual and therefore beyond the intellect; the sacred lore is, of course, authoritative, because it embodies the testimony of sages that have found the Truth; he is told to employ logic, not for discrediting that testimony, but for accepting it; for logic is by itself barren and can be used either way, according to the predilections of its user; it can lead to no final conclusion of its own. By this reflection he is to arrive at the conclusion that the sacred teaching is correct, — that really the Supreme Being is his innermost real Self; and he is to repeat this process until he gets firmly convinced that the truth of the Self is expressed in the sentence 'I am That'.

The third and last stage of the method is meditation on this teaching; he is to fix his mind on the thought 'I am That', to the exclusion of all other thoughts, until he attains perfect concentration on that thought and his mind begins to flow in a steady current of meditation on that thought. The books tell us that if and when this happens, the real Self will reveal itself and ignorance and bondage will cease once and for all. This is the threefold method as taught in the text books.

The sage of Arunachala allows that this threefold method has its use; he says it is a good method for purifying and strengthening the mind, so that it may
become a fit instrument for the quest that is taught by himself; for the strength of the mind consists in its freedom from distraction by the multiplicity of thoughts that usually arise and dissipate its energies; and it is unquestionable that only a strong mind can reach the goal, never a weak one. So says the ancient lore, as well as the sage of Arunachala.

He says: “The direct method of winning the real Self is diving into the Heart, seeking the Source of the ‘I am’; the meditation, ‘I am not this, I am That’, is of course helpful; but it is not itself the method of finding the Self.” Speaking to a visitor he said: “You are told that the ego is not your real Self; if you accept it, then you have only to search for and find that which is your real Self, the real being, of which the ego is a false appearance. Why then do you meditate ‘I am That’? That only gives a fresh lease of life to the ego. It is like someone trying to avoid ‘thinking of the monkey when taking medicine’; by the very act of trying he admits the thought. The source or truth of the ego must be traced and found. Meditating ‘I am That’ is of no use; for meditation is by the mind, and the Self is beyond the mind. In the quest of its own reality the ego perishes of itself; hence this is the direct method; in all else the ego is retained and hence so many doubts arise and the eternal question remains to be faced. Until that question is faced there will be no end to the ego. Then why not face that question at once, without going through those other methods?”

Whatever assumes the reality of the ego, whether explicitly or by implication, would even take us further away from the goal, the egoless state, if we do not beware.

The sage criticises this method: “If one goes on meditating ‘I am not this, I am That’ — instead of winning the Natural State, which is indicated by the Upanishadic text ‘Thou art That’, by pursuing with one-pointed mind, the quest ‘Who am I?’ — it is due to mere weakness of the mind; for that reality is ever shining as the Self”. Here it is pointed out that the Upanishadic text, ‘Thou art That’, tells us the fact that the Self experienced in the egoless state is the Supreme Reality. It therefore means that we should win the egoless state, by the proper method. It does not tell us to meditate ‘I am That’. From the text we must understand that by a single effort we shall win two seemingly different things, namely, the Self and the Supreme Being, because both are one and the same.

The quest of the real Self consists in gathering together all the energies of body and mind by banishing all alien thoughts, and then directing all those energies into a single current, namely the resolve to find the answer to the question ‘Who am I?’. The question may also take the form of ‘Whence am I?’. ‘Who am I?’ means ‘What is the Truth of me?’. ‘Whence am I?’ means ‘What is the Source of the sense of self in the ego?’ The Source

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4 Ulladu Narpadu, Verse 29.
5 Ulladu Narpadu, Verse 32.
in this quest is to be understood not as some remote ancestor or progenitor in evolution, nor as some being existing before the birth of the body, but as a present Source. Someone, who seemed to think that it was important to know about his own previous births, asked the sage how he could get to know of them. The sage answered: "Why bother about previous births? Find out first if now you have been born". In this, as in other idle questions, the ego lurks and manages to side-step the search for the Truth. Really the Self was never born, so the Source is to be sought not in the past, but in the present.

This quest is the one sure method of breaking the vicious circle of the three states; for it not only quiets the thinking mind, but prevents it from falling asleep and thereby losing all consciousness. Therefore, it has been described as 'sleeping watchfully'. Neither in ordinary waking, when the mind wanders from thought to thought — nor in sleep, when even the basic consciousness of 'I am' is submerged — can that vicious circle be over-passed; but for an instant of time in the passage of the mind from the vagrancy of waking to the utter stillness of sleep, the consciousness attains its purity as the formless 'I am'; by the force of the resolve in this quest the consciousness is reduced to and kept steadily in this formless state, and by this the vicious circle is broken and the egoless state is won.

The sage describes the method of the quest in the following: "Just as one dives into a lake, seeking a thing that has fallen in, so should the seeker dive into the Heart, resolved to find wherefrom rises the ego-sense, restraining speech and the vital breath". This brings out the devotional aspect of the quest; as the diver devotes himself to this purpose — the recovery of the lost article — by restraining the breath and diving with all his weight, so too the seeker must be devoted to the finding of the real Self — the source of the 'I am' in the ego — by the ingathering of all the vital and mental energies and directing them Heartwards. The resolve to find the Self is the dynamic element in the quest, without which there can be no diving into the Heart; the question 'Who am I?', or 'Whence am I?' implies this resolve. To him that so dives, says the sage, success is assured; for then, says he, some mysterious force arises from within and takes possession of his mind and takes it straight to the Heart. If the seeker be pure of mind and free from love of individuality he would yield himself unreservedly to this force and get the highest of all rewards; for whatever a man is devoted to, that he gets, and there is nothing higher than the real Self. He that has not this perfect devotion will need to practise the quest repeatedly till the mind becomes pure and strong, or to practise some kind of meditation or devotion to God.

Devotion implies renunciation, which means non-attachment to the unreal; so we are taught by the sages. He that is
greatly devoted to any one thing is so far indifferent to other things; he that is devoted to the Self that is inside is so far indifferent to the world that is outside. Devotion and renunciation are like the two sides of a single medal; they are inseparable. Renunciation strengthens the mind and ensures success in the quest; this we know from common worldly experience; whoever is devoted to any worldly end renounces of his own accord whatever stands in the way, and gains his end. Naturally renunciation is equally necessary for the winning of the greatest of all gains, the egoless state. But we must see to it that we understand renunciation aright; it is a purification of the mind, a harmonious and concentrated direction of the mind to the goal — not simply the observance of external forms of self-denial.

We were told that speech and the vital breath should be restrained; but the sage explains that the breath does not need to be actively restrained, if the resolve be keen and persistent; for then the breath would automatically be suspended, and the energies hitherto operating the body indrawn and reunited to the mind, thus enabling it to dive into the Heart. This ingathering of the vital energies is essential; for so long as these energies are united to the body, the mind cannot turn away from the body and the world and dive into the Heart; when the breathing ceases by the force of the resolve, the mind is no longer aware of the body or the world; the body then becomes almost a corpse.

If the seeker has not the needful strength of devotion so that the breathing does not stop of itself, he is advised to bring about suspension of the breath by the simple method of watching the breathing process. When this watch is steadily kept up, the breath slows down and finally stops; then the mind becomes quiet — free from distracting thoughts — and can be devoted to the quest.

As in meditation of any sort, so in the pursuit of this quest, thoughts of surprising variety may arise and distract the mind, and a sense of defeat and discouragement may be felt. The sage tells us that these thoughts arise only to be quelled, and hence there is no need for the seeker of the Self to be disheartened — to accept defeat; if it seems that success cannot come in the near future — that it could come only after long delay — he should meet the thought by remembering that time itself is not real and that the Self is not in time. In a book of great antiquity it is stated that the seeker of the real Self must have as much perseverance and patience as is involved in attempting to dry up the ocean by removing water from it drop by drop. In another book there is a parable of a pair of sparrows whose eggs were washed away by the sea; the birds determined to recover the eggs, and punish the sea at the same time, by drying it up; this they proceeded to do by repeatedly plunging into the waters and shedding the clinging drops on the shore; the fable says that finally the gods intervened and the eggs were restored.
Every alien thought that arises in the quest and is quelled adds to the mind's strength, says the sage, and thus takes the seeker one step nearer to his goal.

When the seeker has persisted long enough in the quest, and the power from within has arisen and taken possession of the mind, the Heart is quickly reached; that is to say, the mind becomes reduced to the state of pure Consciousness and begins to shine steadily in its pure form, as the formless 'I'; the sage calls this formless Consciousness the 'I am I' to distinguish it from the ego-sense which has the form of 'I am this (body)'; that implies the cessation of the ego form; the finite ego is swallowed up by the infinite Self; with the finite ego are lost all the imperfections and limitations which beset life; desire and fear are at an end, as well as sin and accountability. The real Self was never subject to these; they belonged to the ego and they do not survive the ego. In the egoless state the Self abides in Its own glory; the sage that has thus found the Self, having shed the ego, is not an individual, though he may appear as such to immature disciples and to the rest of the world.

The sage recommends also meditation of the pure 'I am' or 'I' — Aham — as an equivalent of the quest. He says: "Since His Name is 'I', the sadhaka that meditates on the 'I' is taken to the Heart, the World of the real Self." 7

How to reconcile devotion to the Self with the daily routine of work that the world demands? This question was put to the sage by one who had come from a distant place by rail. The sage replied as follows: "Why do you think you are active? Take the case of your coming here. You left home in a cart, took your seat in a train, alighted at the (Tiruvannamalai) station, again got into a cart and found yourself here. When asked, you say that you came here from your town. Is it true? As a matter of fact you remained as you were; only the conveyances moved; just as these movements are taken as yours, so also are the other activities. They are not yours; they are God's activities." The questioner objected that such an attitude will simply lead to blankness of mind and work will come to a standstill. The sage told him, "Go up to that blankness and then tell me." From this we may understand that to the extent we realise that the Self is not the doer it is not necessary for the earnest seeker to retire from his worldly activities — to become a recluse or hermit — in order to prosecute this quest; he may just allow the mind and the senses to do their work automatically, remembering that he himself is not the doer; all the time he may be active in the quest, or in meditation, just as one thinks while walking.

Not only is it unnecessary to renounce one's everyday activities — to become a recluse or hermit — in order to take up this quest, but it would appear from what the sage has actually said that it may be desirable for most of us to continue to be active in order to prepare for the quest.

7 Guru Vachaka Kovai, Verse 716.
The sage tells us that dissolution of the mind in the Self is accomplished by steadily cultivating the knowledge that the mind is but a phantom of the Self, and that this can be done while going through one’s everyday activities. These activities can thus be utilised as a preparation for the quest. When this knowledge — that the mind is but a phantom of the real Self — is firmly established, then it will be easy to take to the quest and persist in it watchfully to the very end.

Many times the question was raised before the sage, whether or not it is necessary to renounce house and family ties and fare forth as a mendicant ascetic. The sage has said that if one be fated to become an ascetic the question will not arise, but that as a rule it is not necessary. On one occasion there was a short dialogue. A visitor asked: “Should I leave home, or may I remain there”? The sage said: “Are you in the house, or is the house in you? You should remain just where you are even now; you cannot go away from That”. The devotee pursued the matter and said: “So I may remain at home.” Sri Bhagavan’s further remark was: “I did not say so. Listen, you should remain steadfast just in that place which is naturally yours always.” The questioner put the question assuming that he was in the house; but the truth is that the whole world is in him as the real Self; so he was told to remain in the Self, that is, to cease to think that the world is real. On another occasion the sage said: “A householder who does not think ‘I am a householder’ is a true ascetic, while an ascetic who thinks ‘I am an ascetic’ is not; the Self is neither an ascetic nor a householder.” It may be remarked that the assumption of an ascetic mode of life is a serious affair; the sage points out that in any case it is the mind that has to be harmonised to the quest, and if it cannot be done at home, it would be equally difficult elsewhere.

A great power for good, which the disciple must utilise wherever possible, is the company of sages. The sacred lore seems to use even the language of hyperbole in recommending this. The sage cites these texts freely. The extent to which one would be benefitted depends on one’s understanding of, and devotion to, the sage as guru. Such devotion is of great importance, as we shall see in a later chapter.

An important caution to the disciple is given in a minor work attributed to Sankara, and this is adopted by the sage: “One should inwardly reflect on the truth of non-duality always, but should not seek to apply the teaching in his actions. Meditation on non-duality is proper in respect of all the three worlds. But understand that it should not be done in respect of the guru”. It may be difficult to make out the reason for these injunctions. But if we remember the power of the ego to pervert and frustrate even honest efforts to realise the Truth — which would mean its own death — we need not be puzzled. Reflection on the truth of advaita tends to dissolve the ego and develop devotion to the Truth. But action from the advaitic standpoint is suicidal, because the enemy
(ego) would be in charge of such action. While ignorance is alive, duality persists in appearing as real, because of the ego-sense, and truly advaitic action is impossible. The sage alone can put advaita into action, because he is egoless. Hence the sacred lore and also the sage advise us to restrict our activities and not to extend them, so as to give as little scope as possible for the ego to frustrate our efforts. Herein it will be useful to remember that a theoretical knowledge of the Self does not destroy the ego, the enemy within us.

Devotion to the guru as God incarnate is proper and necessary, as we shall see later. Until one becomes egoless, therefore, it would be unwise to try to look upon the guru as oneself, because the actual result will be something quite different. It will result in believing oneself to be the equal of the guru. To be really one with the guru is to be egoless. Hence the caution, not to imagine non-difference with the guru.

The following cautions and instructions are given by the sage:

Forgetting (the Self) is verily Death; therefore for him that is out to conquer Death by the quest, the one rule to fulfil is not to forget.

Since even one’s own activities are a cause of forgetting (the Self), is it necessary to say that he that is engaged in the quest of the Self should not engage in the work of other people?

Though there are numerous observances, the rule of regulated eating is alone sufficient for the sadhaka (seeker), because it augments the sattva quality. The rule of food-regulation is that one should allow time for the stomach’s rest, and when hungry, eat a limited amount of sattvic food.

Until the ego dies finally, humility alone is good for the sadhaka; he should never accept homage done to him by others.

The pot sinks, because it takes in water. Timber floats, because it does not. He that is attached becomes bound. He that is not, is not bound, even if he is in the house.

One should overcome misfortunes with faith, courage and serenity, remembering that they come by God’s grace, in order to give strength.

For one that is devoted to the Highest, it is better to be in a worldly condition to be pitied by men, than in one that would cause envy.

9 Superficial students of Advaitic Vedanta who have not sat at the feet of the sage or any sage do not know of this rule of caution and hence think it proper to apply the teaching in action. They as a rule apply it fractionally. The worst mistake they make is in regard to what is called equality, their ideas on this subject are due to a misunderstanding of the teaching. This will be discussed in the next chapter where it will be shown that true equality is something that the sage alone can practise.

10 Guru Ramana Vachana Mala, Sadhakachara prakarana. See Verses 170, 172, 176, 178, 182, 185, 187, 188, 195, 196, 199, 201 to 208 and 214. Verse 176: There are three main qualities or moods of the mind, sattva, rajas and tamas. Of these the first is the state of clarity and calm, the second of restlessness and action, the third of darkness and indifference. The first one is to be cultivated and the other two to be outgrown.
Indifference all round, with the mind serene, without desire and without hate, is the beautiful way of life for sadhakas.

What is called fate is nothing but actions done by oneself before. Hence fate can be wiped off by suitable effort.

What is done with peaceful and pure mind is righteous action; whatever is done with the mind agitated and from desire, is wrong action.

To be unattached and at peace, resigning all burdens to God the Almighty, is the highest tapas.

As the grains that remain at the base of the pivot in a handmill are not crushed, so those that have taken refuge in God are unaffected even by great misfortunes.

As the magnetic needle swerves not from the north so those that have their minds devoted to God do not swerve from the right path through illusion.

Never give way to anxiety, thinking 'When shall I attain this State?' It is beyond space and time, and therefore is neither far nor near.

Pervading everything by Its own nature, the Self is ever free. How can It be bound by maya? So do not give way to despair.

The notion 'I am an unstable soul' has arisen by letting go one's immovable Nature. The sadhaka should cast off this notion and rest in the Supreme Silence.

This is the device for overcoming the capricious nature of the mind. Look upon all that is perceived and on the perceiver as the real Self.

As a thorn that is used for taking out a thorn, should be thrown aside, so a good thought, that is useful for driving out an evil thought, should also be given up.

As one dives into the sea with a (heavy) stone and takes out pearls, so one should dive with non-attachment into the Heart and gain the Self.

The quest of the real Self is fundamentally different from all the methods of winning Deliverance which are in vogue. These are known as yogas. Four of them are generally known, namely, the yogas of action, of devotion, of mind control and of right understanding. The sage compares these four with the quest in the following: "The quest, 'Who is he, to whom belong actions, separateness (from God) ignorance or separateness (from the Reality)?' is itself the yogas of action, of devotion, of right understanding and of mind-control. That is the true state (of the Self) — the untainted and blissful experience of one's own Self — where, the seeker, the 'I' being extinct, these eight have no place".11 Here is made clear that in the four yogas the follower takes the ego to be himself, and thus attributes to the Self some one or other of the defects that appear in himself because of the conclusion. The yogi of action takes it that the Self is the doer of actions and is

thus bound to suffer their effects; he wants to neutralise these actions by other actions. The _yogi_ of devotion is persuaded that he is other than God and needs to become united to Him by devotion. The _yogi_ of right understanding thinks that the Self is in ignorance and wants to remove that ignorance. The _yogi_ of mind-control thinks that the Self is separated from the Reality and seeks reunion by mind control. These are wrong assumptions, because there is no individual soul — because the whole world-order is an illusion. When the real Self is sought and found, it will be found that that Self was never bound, but is ever perfect. The seeker of the Self starts with this knowledge. When by the quest the ego dies, it will be seen that neither these four defects, nor the four remedies for them, have any place in the egoless state, which alone is real. The sage once told this writer that the quest is the Great _Yoga_ — _Maha Yoga_ — and the reason is that, as shown here, all the _yogas_ are included in the quest.

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"Question Contains the Answer"
By N. Balarama Reddiar

"The answer is contained in the question itself, for the answer is always the ever-existing Self and the question is only a modulation of it." This remarkable saying of Sri Bhagavan finds an apt illustration in the following instance.

One of our old devotees, the late Sri A. Bose, lost his only son, a bright boy of twenty. Upset very much by this loss he had a private interview with Bhagavan, which was arranged during His resting time between twelve and two in the afternoon. At one stage in the interview he asked Bhagavan in what appeared a challenging mood: "What is God?" For a devotee of such long standing the question looked incongruous!

Bhagavan kept silent for a while and then gently said: "Your question itself contains the answer: What IS, (is) God." This illuminating answer was amazingly the question itself!

One should note here that it is not merely a clever or well-thought-out answer. That may be so in the case of ordinary men. A _jnani_'s utterances are free from the intermediary action of the mind, which colours and often distorts the truth. In the case of the seers, it is said: 'sense follows speech'. Also, Bhagavan's silence before answering the question was evidently meant to prepare the questioner to receive the full impact of the answer!
Sri Ramana Dhyanam

(A LAD’S PRAYER TO SRI RAMANA)

By N.N. Rajan

(Translated from the Tamil original)

Sri Bhagavan perused the text of the Tamil original and made corrections as well. This was in 1940, when the first edition was published.

Sometime later the author made an English translation, which was published in 1952. The text presented here corresponds to the third (enlarged) edition published in 1975.

‘N.N. Rajan’ is the pen-name assumed by Nataraja Iyer who was known to the older generation of devotees as ‘Station Master Nataraja Iyer’.

1. I humbly offer my heartfelt salutations to that Tiruchuzhi Ramana, the remover of distress, who, having descended from the celestial Mount Kailas, born as the blessed son of Alagammal and Sundaramier, made their hearts happy, by the precious qualities of his life, and attain heavenly Bliss, by virtue of their having given birth to such an incarnate child.

2. I offer my salutations to that Self-effulgent Ramana, the unblemished one who, while young, when overcome by fear of death one day, inquired inwardly about death without informing anyone, acting the scene of death for himself; came to the infallible conclusion that “That which is called ‘I’ ‘I’ is not this insentient body, but it is the Supreme Self or Atman, which is beyond birth and death”; and attained supreme realisation, while yet he was in his teens, without the aid of any earthly master and thus became the universal master.

3. I offer my salutations to that Arunachala Ramana, the king of sages, who, while absorbed in deep meditation heartily received the rebuke of his elder brother Nagaswamy who said — “For such a boy why all this?” — as divine command; who was all along melting in the unceasing thought of Arunachala,
(the presiding deity of Tiruvannamalai); who took Rs.3 from the amount allotted for his school fees, leaving a simple note of profound significance, “I have in search of my father, and in obedience to His command started from here. This is only embarking on a virtuous enterprise. Therefore, none need grieve over this affair. To trace This out no money need be spent”; and started on his sacred pilgrimage to Arunachala.

(Mark the spiritually advanced state of the Maharshi at the time of leaving his home itself, while a boy of sixteen. The note which commenced with the first person ends in the third person, neuter gender (This) which reveals that he was devoid of “I-am-the-body” thought).

4. I offer my salutations to that yogi Ramana who apparently appears to be an ordinary man; who having reached the sacred city of Arunachala took the form
of a young sannyasin, having a vow of silence; who sat secluded in the dark cave of Pathala Lingam in the temple leaving his very body to the mercy of various insects like flies, ants, venomous scorpions etc; who remained quite unconscious of his wounds in the body caused by the insects; and who remained absorbed in severe penance for a prolonged period, which is a miraculous and unparalleled achievement.

5. I offer my salutations to that Hero Ramana who, apprehending obstacles for his penance by vicious persons, changed his abode very often; who remained in the Subramanya Temple, Punthottam, Vahan Mantapam, Mangai Pilliar Koil, Gurumurtham etc., and who spread his fame and name throughout the length and breadth of the country through the devotees of Arunachala; and who became world-famous besides being an adorable one.

6. I offer my salutations to that Vedanta Ramana, the radiator of wisdom through the lustre of his eyes, who sat immersed in the stillness of his Being quite unattached to his relatives, and refused to budge an inch when entreated by his mother and brothers to return home (though they tried their utmost to turn him); and who notified to his mother in writing, "The ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their past deeds. Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try however hard you may; whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to stop it. This is certain. The best course for one, therefore, is to be silent."

7. I offer my salutations to that Gracious Ramana, who, taking his abode in the Virupaksha cave in his transcendental state, had given the sacred, heart-melting hymn to Arunachala named Aksharamanamalai (Marital Garland of Letters), the essence of which is sweet beyond compare; who, with pleasure had always allowed the throng of devotees to visit him whenever they liked; who has cleared the doubts of many aspirants by giving instructions to them in writing (because of his silence), who has been the cause of bringing out so many spiritual books; and who was ever imparting rare and valuable enlightenment to those who resorted to him.

8. I offer my salutations to that wisest-of-the-wise Ramana, who reached perfection in spiritual illumination; who, when by whomsoever asked, imparted only his "Who am I" enquiry mantra (sacred instruction), by saying "Watch the source of the "I"-thought; then your mind will get subdued there; that is penance. Moreover, if you chant a mantra mentally and watch the source from which the vibration springs, then the mind will merge there; that is also penance."

9. I offer my salutations to that genuine and unique Preceptor Ramana, the repository of various attributes, who, when the famous poet, genius and Vedic scholar Kavyakanta Ganapathi Muni sought refuge in his mighty presence for realising the truth, accepted him with grace and blessed him with his lotus eyes, breaking his silence for giving him supreme spiritual instruction; who
cleared his doubts and manifested himself as the proper and sole refuge for the disciple earnestly searching all along for a genuine master; who made him understand, "He is the veritable incarnation of Lord Subramanya who descended unto the earth from the lap of Goddess Parvathi (Siva's consort) only for dispelling the darkness and the misery of the world at large"; who afforded an opportunity for being praised by the Muni with a lyric of forty verses; who accepted Ganapathi Muni as his disciple and who gave the substance for bringing out Ramana Gita, which reveals that he is endowed with the ever-flowing stream of Knowledge Supreme.

10. I offer my salutations to that liberator Ramana, who took up the human form for the good of mankind; who, in spite of his being a supreme renouncer, permitted his mother to stay in the Asramam, giving due weight to the sacred saying of the Upanishads, — "Let thy mother be to thee a god" —; who shaped her in realising the higher truth, befittingly for a state of trance; who, in her last days staying all along with her, placed his divine hands over her head and heart when she breathed her last, to make the soul liberated; and who rejoiced in witnessing his mother getting salvation at his sacred hands.

11. I offer my salutations to that maharshi Ramana, (great seer), the dispeller of illusion, who, having his abode at the Skandasramam frequently went to the place where his mother was interred, and stayed there itself one day, saying, "This is His command", and began to have that as his permanent residence, which served as a good opportunity for the establishment of the present Asramam at the foot of the Hill; and who spread his precious teachings and fame far and near.

12. I offer my salutations to that benign Ramana, who is transmitting spirituality to his disciples; who, when the Asramam was besieged by thieves who committed all atrocities, very gently told them "What is there for you here? You can take away anything you like"; who, even when belaboured by them in one of his legs offered the other leg also — just in the same way as the Saviour Jesus Christ did before; and who looks compassionately on all, destroying their ignorance.

13. I offer my salutations to that benevolent Ramana, the Supreme Self who treats even cows, cats, dogs, monkeys, squirrels, peacocks and other creatures in the same way as human beings without any differentiation whatsoever, giving them proper food and great attention, and who imparts valuable instruction to others also, so that they may treat these creatures also very kindly, just like human beings.

14. I offer my salutations to that beacon-light Ramana, who converts sinfulness to purity; who attracts even many Westerners and foreigners (like Alan Chadwick, Grant Duff, etc. and many others) by his rare illumination; who, without any consideration of caste, creed or religion, communicates the supreme Wisdom, expounding the inner Truth of the Self and bestowing grace on all alike;
and who has drunk deep the nectar of Self-Realisation.

15. I offer my salutations to that RAMANA, THE KING OF THE HOLY HILL, who is beyond intellectual comprehension; who, though he is unmistakably endowed with the supreme Realisation, used to go round the Hill very often, unmindful of his physical trouble, followed by a multitude of devotees, only to put his advice to others in practice and to enunciate the supreme greatness of the Holy Hill; and who set a high example of practising his own precepts.

(The awe-inspiring Arunachala Hill is held in high esteem and veneration. To go round the Hill (of circumference about eight miles) is considered one of the most sacred acts for the removal of sins.)

16. I offer my salutations to that PROPI­TIOUS RAMANA, who is none but the eternal supreme Brahman, beyond time and place, birth and death; who, though ever worshipped by yogins, gods and celestial beings, by singing his glory, permits his devotees to adore his human form and celebrate his Jayanti (birthday) and Mahapuja (the anniversary of his Mother), in a befitting manner; who shines with resplendent light to fulfil the desires of the devotees; and who permits them to see his radiant form with the forehead besmeared with holy ashes having only a small milk-white loin-cloth on his body.

17. I offer my salutations to that EMMY­REAL RAMANA, who is beyond the range of epithets; who teaches us, "Why should a traveller going in a carriage bear his luggage on his head instead of simply keeping it in the carriage? Like this, suffer the ignorant, without surrendering everything to the care of the Lord, worrying themselves unnecessarily about their family, bodily welfare, etc., under the erroneous impression that they are sustaining everything while the fact is — 'Everything is Yourself (God); there is nothing without You (God). We are only the ship and you are the Sailor to guide and take us ashore' — so saying you must make complete surrender and take to self-enquiry with steadfast, one-pointed devotion"; and who described more concisely, as in a nutshell, the path indicated before by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita.

18. I offer my heart-felt and unceasing salutations again and again to that SILENT RAMANA, who removes the miseries of those forlorn in the wilderness; who, as the very embodiment of silence, dispels the ignorance of the devotees without words, infusing abundant peace in them, to make them Self-intoxicated; who declares, "He who has realised the Truth reaches the state of Supreme Bliss and frees himself from the clutches of the cycle of birth and death"; who, with his rays of spiritual perception sheds Knowledge Luminous and irradiates the whole world with his spiritual resplendence, — which cannot be described even by the thousand-mouthed Adisesha (serpent); — who is residing in the holy Asramam on the slopes of Arunachala which is like Ayodhya and Brindavan; who is always surrounded by devotees and is always immersed in sahaja samadhi (trance which is continuous and without any effort in the least); who is charming
in appearance which inspires confidence; and who is bathed in Bliss everlasting.

19. I offer my salutations to that RESPLENDENT RAMANA, the Guru of the world, whose devotees celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his uninterrupted stay (1896-1946) at Arunachala, the Tejo Linga of Siva and obtained His Grace.

20. I offer my salutations to BLISSFUL RAMANA, the steadfast sage who took upon himself all the sins of the world in the form of an abscess on his left-arm and, enduring its agonising pain with the aid of his knowledge and grace, made it clear that, although the body of the sage may be assailed by painful disease, he would remain blissful as ever, unaffected by it even as the broken pieces of sugar-candy retain their sweetness undiminished.

21. I offer my salutations to RAMANA, THE FRIEND OF THOSE IN DISTRESS, whose mother and brother completely surrendered their all to him, looking upon him as their father, mother, guru and God devoting their lives to his service, and whose devotion he rewarded by installing a Linga (Matrubhuteswara — God-become-mother) over his mother's Samadhi in a beautiful temple in the Asramam and graciously making one with himself his brother Niranjanananda Swami on the holy day of Pushya in the month of Thai.

22. I offer my salutations to that RADIANT RAMANA who after the completion of his seventieth year, cast off the veil that was his physical body at 8-47 p.m. on the night of Friday, the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of Chitra in the year Vikriti (14-4-1950) and revealed himself to earnest seekers as the everpresent Effulgence of the Self Supreme.

23. “Remembrance and Contemplation on Arunachala is the easiest means of attaining liberation; Self-Enquiry is the best of sadhanas; silence is the most potent teaching; Ramana ever-residing in the Heart of all is the Greatest Guru”. I offer my salutations to SAT-CHIT-ANANDA RAMANA (BEING-Consciousness Bliss), who proved the truth of these words by his gracious life and showed by living continuously for fifty-four years at Arunachala (Tiruvanamalai) that it is the true place for the attainment of perfect liberation for all persons, from the ignorant to the earnest aspirant; and who shines as a fruit on the palm for the devotees who come to his presence to obtain there his benign Grace without let or hindrance.

24. People first study books, then listen to the spiritual instruction of the Guru, attain Self-knowledge gradually and realise the Self by his look of grace, but the case of Ramana was different. I offer my salutations to one who is devoid of the three gunas inherent in all manifestation, the ATMARAMANA (Self-Ramana), who, contrary to the method described above, spontaneously attained the supreme state of Self-realization without any external aid and clearly described the Truth, not in empty words but by living words born of his own genuine experience as “Self-knowledge is very easy”, the easiest thing on earth and encouraged his devotees on the Path and further before he cast off his physical body assured his devotees “I am not
going anywhere; I shall be here as ever” and is fulfilling his promise by his uninterrupted Presence in the hearts of his devotees and at His Shrine of Grace at Sri Ramanasramam.

**CONCLUDING PRAYER**

Oh Bhagavan Ramana! while godliness is dwindling and false civilisation is advancing in an ever-increasing degree, resulting in chaos and confusion in the present day world, born as the son of Alagammal and Sundaramier, you incarnated as the savour of the world, with the object of protecting the sadhus and redeeming the sinners; you shine as the presiding deity of Arunachala in the guise of a human form. For us who are in distress where else is the proper refuge? Oh All-pervading and All-powerful Ramana! without feeling any disappointment in not attaining liberation in the previous birth itself, I feel more content and highly rejoice in my being gifted to be brought face to face with such a soul who is Bliss itself, ever sporting in the Self and ever silent. You are worshipped as the most distinguished one. I surrender myself to you and pray for thy compassion, thy name is the infallible remedy for all the afflictions of the world. When I stand in your mighty presence copious tears roll down my cheeks and the outside world appears to me a void; I see only thy radiant form. Oh auspicious one and grantor of prosperity! Your radiant form captivates my mind and curbs the evil propensities of it.

Prostrating myself in adoration of thee, I crave your pardon; forgive me my lord, whatever faults of omission or commission I might have committed in my ignorance. I know no words to praise thee sufficiently; there may not be a sinner like me; but it is an indisputable fact that there is no better destroyer of sins than thee. Let my monkey-mind be tamed and subdued by thy mystic power and let me live in peace to attain salvation. Oh Bhagavan! the teacher of knowledge of Brahman through silence, let this short prayer be ever on my lips and allow me a soft corner in thy heart of hearts. Do thou abide in my heart for ever and bless. Blessed indeed are those who are ever drinking the nectar of thy sweet name “Ramana”! Glory be unto thee! Oh Ramana! Glory unto us! Oh Ramana!

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Know that death quickly overtakes a man of impure mind who walks along the difficult road of sense-objects, whereas a person who walks in accordance with the guidance of well-meaning friends and guru, as also his own reasoning, attains his end. Know this to be true.

— Shankara, *Viveka Chudamani*.
Manuscripts of Sri Bhagavan

The two manuscripts reproduced here are in Sri Bhagavan's handwriting.

The first Ms. (pp.46-53) contains the Telugu translation of Sri Bhagavan's *Upadesa Saram* in Nagari as well as Telugu scripts.

As seen from the Ms. the thirty verses were originally known as *Anubhuti Saram*.

Sri Bhagavan has made an innovation here while writing the Telugu text in Nagari Characters.

Taking verse 16, the e in the Telugu word *merutguta* has the phonetic value of a short vowel and not an elongated one (that is, *meru* should rhyme with (the English) men). However there is no way of indicating this in the Devanagari script. Sri Bhagavan has overcome this difficulty by thickening the (diagonal) stroke over *me*. There are two such instances in verse 16 and one in verse 18.

The second manuscript (pp.54-56) contains the Sanskrit text of Sri Bhagavan's *Upadesa Saram* in Malayalam script. (Sri Bhagavan has written in the same note-book his *Sat Darsanam* also. However this is not reproduced here). Except for a change in the format resulting in copying the contents of 12 pages of the original into 3 pages of *THE MOUNTAIN PATH* to suit its dimensions, the fidelity to the original has not been sacrificed in any manner.
अनुव्रतिसारम ॥
कतबल्ल अनुव्रतिरुवैज्ञानिकम्

\[11\] कर्ममु फलमिच्छु कर्तीज्ज वजनम्
कर्ममु देवमा कर्ममु जडाम्।।

\[12\] कर्मपं कमुचोदि कारणं बयुचुरः
गमीखि बलद्रोहु गतिनीयं दयया।।

\[13\] क्षणं एवंकृ ति रुद्दः ञङ्गम्
कः रूढः अश्रुवं जिक्षितं रथं।।

\[14\] कर्तविचि पतलनि ब्रजाम्यकः मीहूः
वित्सु दिनोसानि चेर्चुनु दारि।।

\[15\] जित्युर्फलवी जीविन्यि स्तोतम्
वित्सु दृष्टव्यि चेर्चुनु दारि।।
18] காயா துளைக்கு கரண்கு முனு
 தேவு ஜாஜப சின்னு மேலு

14] போய்ந்த இலீண் செய்யுத் தம்புற
 பெருந்திருக்கு இருக்க மேலு

18] அருமூ துளைச்சவ மாதிரு தரு
 சின்னதிய முதுவா தோள்ளா புரு

12] பேரு கோந்து மேற்புத்து காளசு
 சுமா கிளையா பாறச்சு குருசு

16] உள்மூ தோன்று குத்தமா பாண்வு
 சின்ன புதுவலொ சின்னு தூன்வு

14] மத்திய பெருந்து முனி மாணிக
 பெருந்திருக்கு இருக்க மேலு
\[ \text{\begin{verse}
\begin{align*}
171 & सिद्धा च भारे पोलु सर्वकाचिं तनसु ||
& विरकाचिं तनकड़े वीरवर लौकु ||
172 & नवंगुरु दुर्जनेतः नवं गुरुमानं
& दुर्जनेतः गुरुमानं दुर्जनेतः गुरुमानं ||
173 & भावम दुसुकंदे पहुँचैले नन्देणु \\
& भावना भेदासे परस्युन्नमणु ||
174 & भावना संभरूने भावना तीत \\
& भावना तीत किल्ले विमुखु यथावति यनिरी ||
175 & भावना १०० भाषने भाषने इत्य \\
& भाषने १०० भाषने इत्य १०० १०० १०० १०० ||
176 & कर्मभो भक्तियो नानान मुकिति ||
& कर्मभो स्वस्थभो मनमुखु महिम ||
177 & नानानो हृदयो नानान नवनी ||
& नानानो हृदयो नवनी नवनी १०० १०० १०० १०० ||
\end{align*}
\end{verse} \]


c


c


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c


c


\begin{verbatim}
15. ಒಂದು ಪುನುಮಾಪು ಮಹಿಯನ್ನು ತೇಮಿನ ಮಂದಿಯ ಪಾಲಿಸಿ ಬಾಡು.
16. ಚಿತ್ರವನ್ನು ದೃಶ್ಯ ಮಸ್ತನ ತೆಳೆ ತನ್ನದಿ.
17. ವೈಲ್ಮೂರ್ ಪುನುಮಾಪು ಮರಳಕ ನೆಂಜಿ.
18. ಮನಸುಮಾತ ಪುನುಮಾಪು ಮರಳಕ. ನೆಂಜಿ.
19. ಆರೋಗ್ಯವನ್ನು ಪೂರೈಯಾಕು ಹೇಳಿಕೊಂಡು ನೀಡ್ಡು.
20. ತಕ್ಕತುವ ಮನಸ್ಸ ದಾನಿನ ನಿಂಬ.
21. ಶಾಯಾ ನೀರಿ ನುರುಳು ಕಚ ಜುಗಿ.
22. ಸಾರಾತ್ತೂರು ಮೂರು ಮೂರು ಅಡಿ.
23. ನಮು ನಂತರ ಪಾತ್ರ ಕವಸಿ.
24. ಉಪರ್ಪುಗಳ ಮಲ್ಲದೆ ಬೆಳಕಿ.
25. ಮನಸು ಮೂರು ದಾನಿನ ನಿಂಬ.
26. ತಕ್ಕತುವ ಮನಸ್ಸ ದಾನಿನ ನಿಂಬ.
27. ಶಾಯಾ ನೀರಿ ನುರುಳು ಕಚ ಜುಗಿ.
28. ಸಾರಾತ್ತೂರು ಮೂರು ಮೂರು ಅಡಿ.
29. ನಮು ನಂತರ ಪಾತ್ರ ಕವಸಿ.
30. ಉಪರ್ಪುಗಳ ಮಲ್ಲದೆ ಬೆಳಕಿ.
\end{verbatim}
119\# ನೆನಿಂದು ಪುಡ್ಳಾ ಸ್ಥಾನಮು ಜೆತಕ \#
   ನೆನಿಂದ ಪಾಡಿಂದು ಜೆಣಿಪ ದೃಢವಿರ \#

120\# ಯೆಣೆಂ ಗುಂಡು ಎರಡು ಇಡುಕು \#
   ಯೆಣೆಂ ಕನಸಿಕ ಇಡುಕು \#

121\# ಯೆಣೆಂ ಗಿರುಗೋಟ ನಣುನೆ ನಲುಚು \#
   ದಾನಗಳ ದೃಷ್ಟಿನ ದಾನಪು ದೃಷ್ಟಿ \#

122\# ಲೇಂಬರ ಸಂಬಂಧೀ ನಞ್ಜಿ ನಞ್ಜಿ\#
   ಲೇಂಬರ ಲೇಂಬಿಕ ಸಾರು \#

123\# ದೇಹಮಿ ದ್ವಿಯವಡನ ಪ್ರೀತಂ ಬಣಿಕ\#
   ನಾಹಮು ಸಜ್ಜಿಸು ಸೇಳಾಯ ಸನು \#

124\# ಏಕಾವಯಾನ ಕೇಮಾಗಸದ ಕೇಮಾಗಸದ \#
   ಜೆಣಿಪ ಪಿರುಳಲಿಸರು \#

||33|| उक्तिदि देकियले सेकाचिनु हेतु||

||33|| केलुक वा सेयात मिळिवें ठेवा||

||33|| अणूणी बेषवस लोकवर्तु आलम||

||33|| भेंधामु अपविचि भिलामु लेया||

||33|| केलुक नंतर रहजेंग असेहू||

||33|| अणूणी मेकू बिलास्तु ठेवा||

||33|| वानुपा पिंप्दूलिल तलें गुटे||

||33|| वानुमा मेकू गीजात तलदाँ शिनामु||

||33|| लझोसे करती बर्युःो नाहाहूः||

||33|| बारीक तेलानें बर्युःो नाहाहूः||

||33|| वानुमा नुमिकिले तलें गुटे||

||33|| वानुपा डेयाड तलमा निप्पा||

||33|| कर्नुरु मंगेयुःो बर्युःो काका||

||33|| जानुः ठासुर राठुःो नौका||
॥ २६॥ ज्ञानम ज्ञानं बुद्धि लेनिबो धंबे॥
          ज्ञानमेन सर्वेरको देनियु तेहदु ॥

॥ २७॥ सर्वं ज्ञानं सुनो यमे तिलं श्रोधं
          परस्यसा तानमेन सुनो तिलं ॥

॥ २८॥ लनरुप मैददिनि लावुद सिंधु
          जनचित नंतारा खंडसु समु ॥

॥ २९॥ छेदाने चित्ततः हरं लनरुप सुलूम
          संहिताको नासंहिता. खूलिन सलूम ॥

॥ ३०॥ बघसु वृक्कुलिनि परसुर नितैं ॥
          बेंदुनु दंविक पर्यच्छ रितुङ दु ॥

॥ ३१॥ वृक्कद्रवम बुद्धि नर्तकि नन्दाने
          नमो नमो नव्यान नव्याहं नव्याजकि ॥

॥ ३२॥ अहमुके नित्याय मनुभूत नित्याय
          महेतुम तपसने महिरम गणनिये ॥

॥ ३३॥ अहमुके नित्याय मनुभूत नित्याय
          महेतुम तपसने महिरम गणनिये

"संपूर्णम् ॥ ३३०० श्रवणम् ॥"
ഒരു പ്രകടനം

എന്നാണ് പിന്നീട് ജനാധിപത്യ സ്റ്റേറ്റ് മാർട്ടി ആന്റർ നോബൽ സ്മാരകം അബദ്ധമാക്കുന്നത്।

ശുദ്ധസന്താനം നടക്കുന്നതിന് ഏറ്റവും അധികം കാരണം സമുദായമായി വാദിക്കുന്നതിനുവെള്ളം എന്നതാണ്.

പ്രത്യേകം പിന്നീട് സ്വദേശികൾ മാരമ്മാവ് നിർവഹിക്കുന്ന പോഷണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുകയാണ്.
Bhagavan Ramana: 
His Silent Upadesa

By Arthur Osborne

It is surprising how secret was the upadesa of Sri Bhagavan, that is to say the guidance or instruction he gave to his disciples — there is no exact English translation of the word. Although he was accessible to all alike, although questions were normally asked and answered in public, the guidance given to each disciple was nevertheless intensely direct and adapted to his character. When asked once by Swami Yogananda, a Swami with a large following in America, what spiritual instruction should be given to the people for their uplift, he replied, “It depends on the temperament and spiritual maturity of the individual. There can be no mass instruction”. It is enough to recall the stories of four devotees already referred to — Echammal, the Mother, Sivaprakasam Pillai and Natesa Mudaliar — to realize how enormously the treatment varied.

Sri Bhagavan was intensely active — he himself has said so, though none who experienced his Grace needed any confirmation — and yet so concealed was his activity that casual visitors and those who failed to perceive believed that he gave no upadesa at all or that he was indifferent to the needs of seekers. There were many such, like the Brahmin who tried to dissuade Natesa Mudaliar from visiting him.

The extreme importance of this question lies in the fact that (except in the rarest of cases, such as that of Sri Bhagavan himself) Realization is possible only through the Grace of a guru. Sri Bhagavan was as definite about this as other Masters. Therefore it was not enough for the sadhaka (aspirant) to know that his teaching was sublime and his presence inspiring; it was necessary to know that he was a guru giving diksha (initiation) and upadesa (instruction).

From Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge (1994).
The term 'Guru' is used in three senses. It can mean one who, although he has no spiritual attainment, has been invested (like the ordination of a priest) with the right to give initiation and upadesa. He is often hereditary and is not unlike a family doctor for spiritual health. Secondly, the guru can be one who, in addition to the above, has some spiritual attainment and can guide his disciples by more potent upadesa (even though the actual practices enjoined may be the same) as far as he himself has gone. But in the highest and truest meaning of the word, the guru is he who has realized Oneness with the Spirit that is the Self of all. This is the Sat-guru.

It is in this last sense that Sri Bhagavan used the word. Therefore he said, “God, guru and Self are the same”. And in describing the guru he said (in Spiritual Instruction):

The guru is one who at all times abides in the profound depths of the Self. He never sees any difference between himself and others and he is completely free from false notions of distinction that he himself is the Enlightened or the Liberated while others around him are in bondage or the darkness of ignorance. His firmness or self-possession can never be shaken under any circumstances and he is never perturbed.

Submission to this guru is not submission to any outside oneself but to the Self manifested outwardly in order to help one discover the Self within. “The Master is within; meditation is meant to remove the ignorant idea that he is only outside. If he were a stranger whom you were awaiting he would be bound to disappear also. What would be the use of a transient being like that? But as long as you think that you are separate or are the body, so long is the outer Master also necessary and he will appear as if with a body. When the wrong identification of oneself with the body ceases, the Master is found to be none other than the Self”.

It is axiomatic that one who is a guru in this supreme sense of having realized his identity with the Absolute does not say so, inasmuch as there is no ego left to affirm the identity. Also he does not say that he has disciples, for, being beyond otherness, there can be no relationship for him.

Although the jnani (Enlightened) is one with the Absolute, his traits of character continue to exist outwardly as the vehicle of his manifestation, so that one jnani can have quite different human characteristics from another. One characteristic of Sri Bhagavan was his shrewdness and perspicacity. There seems no doubt that, just as he allowed himself to be considered a mouni (one who has taken a vow of silence) during his early years at Tiruvannamalai in order to avoid disturbance, so he took advantage of this doctrinal impossibility of asserting identity or admitting relationship in order to ward off unwarranted demands for upadesa from those who were not his real devotees. It is remarkable how successful the defence was, while real devotees were not taken in by it and were not intended to be.
Let us examine Sri Bhagavan’s statement carefully. He sometimes said he had no disciples and never stated explicitly that he was the guru; however, he used the expression ‘the guru’ as equivalent to ‘the jnani’ and in such a way as to leave no doubt that he was the guru, and he more than once joined in singing the song Ramana Sadguru.

Moreover, when a devotee was genuinely distressed and seeking a solution he would sometimes reassure him in a way that left no room for doubt. An English disciple, Major Chadwick, kept a record of such an assurance given to him in the year 1940:

**Chadwick:** Bhagavan says he has no disciples?

**Bhagavan:** Yes.

**Chadwick:** He also says that a guru is necessary if one wishes to attain Liberation?

**Bhagavan:** Yes.

**Chadwick:** What then must I do? Has my sitting here all these years been just a waste of time? Must I go and look for some guru in order to receive initiation seeing that Bhagavan says he is not a guru?

**Bhagavan:** What do you think brought you here such a long distance and made you remain so long? Why do you doubt? If there had been any need to seek a guru elsewhere, you would have gone away long ago.

The guru or jnani (Enlightened One) sees no difference between himself and others. For him all are jnanis, all are one with himself, so how can a jnani say that such and such is his disciple? But the unliberated one sees all as multiple, he sees all as different from himself, so to him the guru-disciple relationship is a reality, and he needs the Grace of the guru to waken him to reality. For him there are three ways of initiation — by touch, look and silence, (Sri Bhagavan here gave me to understand that his way was by silence, as he has to many, on other occasions).

**Chadwick:** Then Bhagavan does have disciples!

**Bhagavan:** As I said, from Bhagavan’s point of view there are no disciples, but from that of the disciple the Grace of the guru is like an ocean. If he comes with a cup he will only get a cupful. It is no use complaining of the niggardliness of the ocean; the bigger the vessel the more he will be able to carry. It is entirely up to him.

**Chadwick:** Then to know whether Bhagavan is my guru or not is just a matter of faith, if Bhagavan will not admit it.

**Bhagavan:** (Sitting straight up, turning to the interpreter and speaking with great emphasis) Ask him, does he want me to give him a written document?

Few were so persistent as Major Chadwick in their demand for an assurance. The statement involving recognition of duality would not be made, but short of that Sri Bhagavan admitted being the guru clearly enough for any person of understanding and goodwill; and some knew it without verbal confirmation.
A. Bose, a Bengali industrialist, as recorded by S.S. Cohen, once tried to elicit a precise statement. He said, “I am convinced that a guru is necessary for the success of the sadhaka’s (aspirant’s) efforts”. Then he added, with a quizzical smile, “Does Bhagavan feel for us?”

But Sri Bhagavan turned the tables on him, “Practice is necessary for you; the Grace is always there”. After a short silence he added, “You are neck deep in water and yet you cry out that you are thirsty”.

Even the practice really meant making oneself receptive to the Grace; Sri Bhagavan sometimes illustrated this by saying that although the sun is shining you must make the effort of turning to look at it if you want to see it. Professor Venkatramiah records in his diary that he said to Mrs. Piggoot, an English visitor, “Realisation is the result of the guru’s Grace more than of teachings, lectures, meditations, etc. These are only secondary but that is the primary and essential cause”.

Some who knew his teaching at second hand suggested that he did not hold it necessary to have a guru and explained the lack of explicit initiation in that way, but he rejected this suggestion unequivocally. S.S. Cohen has recorded a conversation on this subject with Dilip Kumar Roy, the celebrated musician of Sri Aurobindashram:

Dilip: Some people report Maharshi to deny the need of a guru. Others say the reverse. What does Maharshi say?

Bhagavan: I have never said that there is no need for a guru.

Dilip: Sri Aurobindo often refers to you as having had no guru.

Bhagavan: That depends on what you call guru. He need not necessarily be in human form. Dattatreya had twenty four gurus — the elements, etc. That means that any form in the world was his guru. Guru is absolutely necessary. The Upanishads say that none but a guru can take a man out of the jungle of mental and sense perceptions, so there must be a guru.

Dilip: I mean a human guru. The Maharshi didn’t have one.

Bhagavan: I might have had at some time or other. And didn’t I sing hymns to Arunachala? What is a guru? Guru is God or the Self. First a man prays to God to fulfil his desires, then a time comes when he does not pray for the fulfilment of a desire but for God himself. So God appears to him in some form or other, human or non-human, to guide him as a guru in answer to his prayer.

It was only when some visitor brought up the objection that Sri Bhagavan himself had not had a guru that he explained that the guru need not necessarily take human form, and it was understood that this referred to very rare cases.

Perhaps it was with V. Venkataraman that he came nearest to an explicit admission that he was the guru. He told him once, “Two things are to be done, first to find the guru outside yourself and then to find the guru within. You have already done the first”.

Dilip: Some people report Maharshi to deny the need of a guru. Others say the reverse. What does Maharshi say?

Bhagavan: I have never said that there is no need for a guru.
Or perhaps the confirmation that I myself received was even more explicit. After some weeks at the Ashram I perceived that Sri Bhagavan really was a guru giving initiation and guidance. I wrote to inform friends in Europe of this and, before sending the letter, I showed it to Sri Bhagavan and asked whether to send it. He approved of it and, handing it back, said, "Yes, send it".

To be a guru is to give initiation and upadesa. The two are inseparable, for there is no upadesa without the initial act of initiation and no point in initiation unless it is to be followed up with upadesa. The question, therefore, sometimes took the form of whether Sri Bhagavan gave initiation or upadesa.

When asked whether he gave initiation Sri Bhagavan always avoided a direct answer. Had the answer been 'no' he would most certainly have said 'no'; but had he said 'yes' the defence against unwarranted demands for initiation would have been become and it would have become necessary to accept some and reject others by a decision that would have appeared arbitrary instead of letting their own understanding or lack of understanding make the decision.

His most usual form of reply was that given to Major Chadwick, "There are three modes of initiation, by touch, by look and by silence". This was the practice usual to Sri Bhagavan of making an impersonal doctrinal utterance in which, however, the answer to the specific question was to be found. The statement is well known, the three modes of initiation — according to the Hindus — being typified by the bird, which needs to sit on its eggs in order to hatch them, the fish, which needs only to look at them, and the tortoise, which needs only to think of them. Initiation by look or by silence has become very rare in this age; it is the mouna-diksha of Arunachala, of Dakshinamurti, and is the mode of initiation particularly appropriate to the direct path of Self-enquiry which Sri Bhagavan taught. It was, therefore, doubly suitable, both inherently and as affording a convenient camouflage.

The initiation by look was a very real thing. Sri Bhagavan would turn to the devotee, his eyes fixed upon him with blazing intenntness. The luminosity, the power of his eyes pierced into one, breaking down the thought-process. Sometimes it was as though an electric current was passing through one, sometimes a vast peace, a flood of light. One devotee has described it, "Suddenly Bhagavan turned his luminous, transparent eyes on me. Before that I could not stand his gaze for long. Now I looked straight back into those terrible, wonderful eyes, how long I could not tell. They held me in a sort of vibration distinctly audible to me". Always it was followed by the feeling, the indubitable conviction, that one had been taken up by Sri Bhagavan, that henceforth he was in charge, he was guiding. Those who knew would perceive when such an initiation took place, but it would usually be inconspicuous; it might happen during the chanting of the Vedas, when few would be watching, or the devotee might feel a sudden impulse to go to
Sri Bhagavan before daybreak or at some time when few or none would be present. The initiation by silence was equally real. It entered into those who turned to Sri Bhagavan in their hearts without being able to go bodily to Tiruvannamalai. Sometimes it was given in a dream, as with Natesa Mudaliar.

No master was more categorical than Sri Bhagavan about his guidance and protection once a devotee had been taken up and the silent initiation given. He assured Sivaprakasam Pillai in the exposition that was later published as *Who am I?*, "He that has won the Grace of the guru shall undoubtedly be saved and never forsaken, just as the prey that has fallen into the tiger’s jaws will never be allowed to escape”.

A Dutch devotee, L. Hartz, being able to stay only a short time, and perhaps fearing that his determination might weaken when he left, asked for an assurance and was told, “Even if you let go of Bhagavan, Bhagavan will never let go of you”.

Two other devotees, a Czech diplomat and a Muslim professor, struck by the unusual force and directness of the assurance, asked whether it applied only to Hartz or to all the devotees and were told, “To all”.

On another occasion, a devotee grew despondent at seeing no progress in himself and said, “I am afraid if I continue like this I shall go to hell”. And Sri Bhagavan replied, “If you do, Bhagavan will go after you and bring you back”.

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**ON ANOTHER’S SORROW**

By William Blake

Can I see another’s woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another’s grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear?
And not feel my sorrow’s share?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow fill’d?

Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear?
No, no never can it be,
Never, never can it be!

And can he who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small,
Hear the small bird’s grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear,

And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in their breast;
And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant’s tear;

And not sit both night and day,
Wiping all our tears away?
O, no, never can it be,
Never, never can it be!

He doth give his joy to all;
He becomes an infant small;
He becomes a man of woe;
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh
And thy maker is not by;
Think not thou canst weep a tear
And thy maker is not near.

O, he gives to us his joy
That our grief he may destroy;
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.
Even the circumstances of the devotee’s life are shaped by the guru so as to promote his sadhana (spiritual progress). One devotee was told, “The Master is both within and without, so he creates conditions to drive you inwards and at the same time prepares the interior to drag you to the Centre”.

If one who was not turned to Sri Bhagavan in his heart asked whether he gave upadesa he might make some enigmatic reply or none at all, and in either case a negative answer would be presumed. In fact, his upadesa, like his initiation, was through silence. The mind was silently turned in the direction in which it should strive. A devotee was expected to understand this. Very few needed verbal assurance.

The story of V. Venkataraman, who has already been referred to, is illustrative. In his youth he was a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, but he felt the need for a living guru in flesh and blood, so he prayed to him with the fervour of intense longing, “Master, grant me a living guru no less perfect than yourself”. Very soon afterwards he heard of Sri Ramana, then but a few years in the Ashram at the foot of the hill. He went there with an offering of flowers. It so happened (as would always happen when desirable) that there was no one else in the hall when he arrived. Sri Bhagavan was reclining on the couch, behind him on the wall the portrait of Sri Ramakrishna to which Venkataraman had prayed. Sri Bhagavan broke the garland in half; one half he bade the attendant place upon the portrait and the other on the temple lingam. Venkataraman had a feeling of lightness and ease. He was at home, his purpose achieved. He told the story of his coming. Sri Bhagavan asked him, “You know about Dakshinamurti”?

“I know that he gave silent upadesa,” he replied.

And Sri Bhagavan said, “That is the upadesa you will get here”.

This silent upadesa was in fact very varied. Sri Bhagavan spoke and wrote most about the vichara or Self-enquiry, and therefore the opinion arose that he prescribed only jnana-marga, (the Path of Knowledge), which most people find too sheer in this age. But, in fact he was universal and provided guidance for every temperament, by the path of Devotion no less than of Knowledge. Love and devotion to him are a bridge across the abyss to salvation. He had many devotees for whom he prescribed no other path.

The same Venkataraman grew uneasy after some time at being given no sadhana — that is no practice to perform — and complained.

“And what brought you here?” Sri Bhagavan asked.

“Thinking of you, Swami”.

“But that is also your sadhana. That is sufficient”.

And indeed, the thought or remembrance of Bhagavan began to accompany him everywhere, to become inseparable from him.
The Concept of Matter and Spirit in Sankhya

Dr. H.L. Chandrashekara

SANKHYA is an interesting as well as important school of Indian Philosophy. Its impact on the history of Indian Philosophy as a whole is unquestionable. But this is not to ignore the fact that it has its roots in the Upanishads. The main theme of the Upanishads is not Sankhya. However, they contain seeds of Sankhyan thoughts which were later developed into an independent system.

Sankhya marks a significant development from Vaisheshika in that it is dualistic in character. That means it believes in the existence of two ultimate realities, namely, mutaprakriti (primal matter) and purusha (spirit), whereas Vaisheshika traces the world to seven categories. Sankhya is uncompromising in its dualism in that it provides equal ontological status to both these principles, whatever be its logical consequence. Both of them are uncaused, eternal, omnipresent, independent and non-composite. While prakriti is unconscious and ever dynamic (nitya parinami), giving rise to evolutes (prasavadharmi), purusha is conscious, static and changeless.

The existence of prakriti is ascertained by reason. In fact Sankhya bases most of its conclusions on reasoning, and rarely invokes the aid of revelation for the purpose. This reasoning which is further based upon the observation of common things, takes two forms.

The first one is that we see in the world things emerging from and being reabsorbed into their respective causes. For example, a pot comes from clay and is blended back into the same clay. Similarly the visible world must have a physical origin into which it must dissolve ultimately, and this origin is prakriti. This means the concept of prakriti is understood through reasoning from visible to invisible — beyond which we cannot further carry out our investigation.

1 A.B. Keith, The Sankhya System, Chapter I.
2 Sankhya Karika, 11.
3 The other word used for prakriti, viz., pradhana, literally means “what is put before”, “presupposed” or “what was there in the beginning.”
Secondly, the world is finite, not in the sense of being limited by space and time. Because the latter are not separate entities to limit the world. The world is finite in the sense that it is not ‘self-sustaining’ or ‘pervasive’. So the finite world must imply the existence of an infinite source from which it derives its sustenance, and that is prakriti.4

Prakriti is thus the first cause of the physical world and it accounts for both matter and force. It is paramasyakta, ‘The Ultimate Unmanifest’. It is infinite in the sense that it does not depend upon any other entity for its sustenance. As pointed out above, even space and time are aspects of prakriti and they do not exist apart from it as independent entities. It is not matter that exists in space and time but vice versa. Sankhya makes a further advance from Nyaya Vaisheshika when it traces the whole physical world to one single prakriti. Nyaya Vaisheshika traces it to five physical elements.

The concept of guna occupies a very important place in Sankhya, and prakriti is said to be a complex of three gunas. Gunas are so called because they intertwine the Self into bondage. They are also gunas because of their subordinate nature, serving the purpose of purusha. The three gunas of prakriti are sattwa, rajas and tamas. Sattwa represents what is light (sattwam laghu prakshakam), tamas what is coarse or heavy, and rajas what is active (chalam). We cannot find these gunas in isolation in the world and hence they are the ‘building blocks’ of the physical world. The triple character of prakriti accounts for the discord and diversity of the world satisfactorily.5 The gunas are interdependent. Sankhya illustrates this with the analogy of oil, wick and fire, which, though different in their natures, act in coordination and produce a flame.

The gunas are the substratum of change which, as in Buddhism, is perpetual. But change, here, unlike in Buddhism is not total. The gunas persist while their modes appear and disappear.6 Change is both potential and actual, which respectively represent dissolution (pralaya) and creation (sarga). In the first the modes of prakriti are latent whereas in the second they are manifest.

Creation is brought forth by the union of prakriti and purusha, just as a child is created by the union of woman and man.7 Neither prakriti nor purusha by itself can carry out this task independently. Though purusha is consciousness, it is passive and immutable. A passive and unchangeable purusha cannot actively involve itself in the act of creation though

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4 Karikas 10,14 and 15.
5 Later Sankhyakaras see further manifoldness in these gunas, making the doctrine more like Vaisheshika, which believes in pluralistic atoms with qualitative distinctions vide M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, p.272.
6 The idea can be compared and contrasted with Descartes’ theory of substance. While in Sankhya, gunas themselves are substantive, they are attributive in Descartes. For example, though thought and extension are relatively substances according to Descartes, they are ultimately attributive with reference to God, who is the only substance. But Sankhya admits of no theistic principle connecting prakriti and purusha. While according to it puraska is attributeless, its approximate parallel viz., thought in Descartes, itself is an attribute of God.
7 Gaudapada on Sankhya karika.
it has the power of contemplation. Similarly though prakriti is active, it is unconscious. An unconscious principle cannot work out an orderly creation without the supervision of a conscious principle. So prakriti and purusha mutually interact in such a way as to perform the various acts of creation. It is by the coordination of active but unconscious prakriti and passive but conscious purusha that creation is rendered possible (pangvandhanyaya).

It must however be noted that purusha, being inactive and immutable, its cooperation is only in the form of its mere presence. This means that mere presence is enough to initiate the disturbance in prakriti which results in creation. This is illustrated by the analogy of a static magnet which, by its vicinity, generates movement in the iron filings attracted to it.

By the presence of purusha, a deep commotion is set up in the vast womb of prakriti and gunas start dominating over one another. This characterises the inception of evolution (sarga) of which Sankhya gives a graphic description. The very first product of prakriti’s evolution is mahat the subjective counterpart of which is called buddhi (intellect). Being the principle of ideation, this has a dominance of sattwa guna. From mahat emerges ahamkara, the principle of individuation, which creates in the individual a sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. From ahamkara arise two sets of principles. One set fosters conscious life. Under it come mind, the five sense organs, and the five motor organs, all of which have their source in the sattwa (svakrta) aspect of ahamkara. The second set forms the basis of the objective world, viz., the five tanmatras (subtle elements) which emerge from the tamas (bhutadhi) aspect of ahamkara. The rajas aspect of ahamkara helps in the emergence of both these sets.

Finally, the subtle elements combine in various proportions to give rise to the five gross elements (mahabhuta). From shabda tanmatra emerges akasha (ether), with sound as its major quality. From shabda and sparsha tanmatras emerges vayu (air), having sound and touch as its qualities. From these two and rupa tanmatra springs agni (fire), which has sound, touch and colour as its prominent qualities. From these three and rasa tanmatra is produced apas (water), with the qualities of sound, touch, colour and taste. From these four and gandha, prithvi comes into being, having all the five qualities, viz., sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. It is to be noted in this context that starting from akasha, the elements formed are more and more gross.

8 Karika 21.
9 Sannidhimatram· Sankhya Pravachana Bhashya, 1-96.
10 Tattannidhanat Adhistrativom Manivat.
11 According to yoga, the initial stimulus for this disturbance comes from God.
12 Critics question the necessity of postulating so many intermediary principles like mahat, ahamkara and tanmatras to account for the world of common experience. However Sankhya postulates these principles on the basis of verbal testimony (aptagama), or the authority of ancient sankhyan teachers, and not on reason — vide, M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, p.278.
13 Karika 25.
14 According to Vyasa’s Yoga Sutra Bhashya, each element further consists of small particles called paramanus, which should not be mistaken for the atoms of Nyaya Vaisheshika, vide M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, p.276.
Sankhya classifies the above 24 evolutes into three groups, viz., *prakriti*, *vikriti* and *prakriti-vikriti*. Prakriti is only the cause and not the effect of any other cause and is therefore known as *mulapракритि* or prime matter. A vikriti is only the effect and not the cause of any other evolute. Under this group come mind, the five sense organs, five motor organs and five gross elements. A *prakriti-vikriti* is both the effect of a cause and the cause of some other effect. Mahat, *ahamkara* and the *tanmatras* belong to this group. Mahat, being the cause of *ahamkara*, is the effect of *mulapракритि*. Similarly *ahamkara*, being the immediate cause of mind, the five senses, five motor organs and five subtle elements, is the effect of *mahat*. The *tanmatras*, being the cause of the five gross elements are effects of *ahamkara*.

The evolution of *prakriti* up to this stage may be called primary evolution. It involves *Tattvantara Parinama* as Sankhya *Tattwa Kaumudi* says — the transformation of one principle into another. However there is also secondary evolution which does not involve emergence of any new evolute. Here the gross elements combine together in various proportions to give rise not to any subtle principle, but to a composite object like a tree or a stone. "As in the game of dice, they are ever the same but as they fall in various ways, they mean to us different things". Thus, difference between primary and secondary evolution amounts only to that of grade or degree in change. While change is more radical in the first, it is not so in secondary evolution. The destruction of an object means its disintegration into the five gross elements but does not extend further into subtle elements and so on. Such a regressive break-up occurs only at the time of dissolution wherein *prakriti* recovers its original state of equilibrium.
There is a question as to how the same prakriti which is insentient gives rise to evolutes which are both objective and subjective or psychic in character. But the evolutes which seem to be psychic in character, are not really so, because they owe their psychic nature to the influence of purusha. Though both a mirror and the wall on which it is hung are material, yet one can reflect our features clearly while the other cannot. Similarly, the two sets of evolutes, though originating from the same prakriti, behave differently. While one responds to the influence of purusha readily, the other does not do so. The difference is not in essence but in their degrees of fineness or coarseness.

Sankhya is known for its scientific doctrine called satkaryavada, which is quite opposite to Nyaya-vaisheshika's asatkaryavada. According to satkaryavada, matter and force being indestructible, creation means only the manifestation of what was already latent, while destruction is only a change of form and not annihilation. According to Nyaya-vaisheshika, effect being not existent (asat) in the cause has a fresh beginning (arambha) at the time of creation. Sankhya, however, rejects this view.

According to Sankhya, the effect is pre-existent in a subtle or implicit form prior to its creation. Creation does not imply coming out of anything new, but rather the manifestation of what was subtle contained in the cause into a gross or explicit form. Existence implies subsistence. An explicit effect may exist for a while but it always subsists in an implicit or causal form. Creation of a statue from stone is possible because of the presence of the statue latently in the stone. What the sculptor does is to remove the unnecessary elements from the stone which obscure the manifestation of the statue. The role of efficient cause (nimittakarana) is negative in that it removes the obstacles hindering the manifestation of an effect from the cause. Similarly the whole world prior to its evolution exists in prakriti in a potential form and is transformed into a gross form during the time of evolution. “Prakriti is characterised by universal potency and holds in itself the possibility of all forms. The efficient cause only determines the direction in which prakriti should exhibit its movement by removing the impediment in that direction. It is like water in a reservoir which tries to find an outlet at every point and gushes forth only where resistance to its effort is removed.”

According to classical Sankhya, creation does not point to any theistic principle. This is in contrast with Nyaya-vaisheshika, according to which creation implies not only material cause (atoms) but also efficient cause (God). In Sankhya, however, though purusha's presence is necessary for prakriti's evolution, purusha does not actively involve itself in the act of evolution, because it is passive. In fact, purusha is neither cause nor effect (anubhaya).

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16 It is because of this atheistic orientation, that the system is called Nirishwara Sankhya. Its allied system, namely, Yoga, however, is called Seishwara Sankhya because of its theistic character. But God here shares only an honorary status. In Yoga, God is not the creator of the world, but a perfect soul.
Purusha: Like prakriti, purusha which is aguni is also established on the basis of inference. The following are the grounds on which purusha's existence is established:

The physical world, being insentient, requires a sentient principle to experience it. Object implies the existence of subject.

The complexity of prakriti implies the existence of something which is simple viz., purusha.

There is a spiritual instinct in man to be free from bondage, and so the efforts to escape must be different from what it wants to escape from, viz., prakriti.

There is a design in nature, particularly in the living body, which can be understood only in the context of consciousness. But this consciousness need not necessarily imply God. It rather implies one who is profited by the design existing in nature, or for whom the design is supposed to exist. A bed, for instance, would be meaningless if there were none to use it. Hence there is teleology in prakriti's evolution. This teleology is not for itself but for something which falls outside its unconscious realm, and that something is purusha.

The purpose of prakriti’s evolution is twofold, namely, enjoyment (bhoga) and liberation (apavarga). The two are not without connection, and the first ultimately and necessarily culminates in the second. The dual experience of the pleasure and pain of samsara makes the self philosophically wise, so that it turns its mind towards moksha.

FITNESS FOR LIBERATION

Only a person who is free from the terrible chord of attachment to sense-objects, which is difficult to get rid of, is fit for liberation, and none else even though he may be well-versed in all the six sastras.

The shark of attachment catches hold of those seekers after liberation who, with an apparent dispassion, wish to cross the ocean of samsara, and forcibly drawing them back, drowns them half-way.

One who has killed the shark known as sense-object with the sword of proper dispassion, crosses the ocean of samsara, free from all obstacles.

— Shankara, Viveka Chudamani.
Group photo (1936).


13 June 1938: Opposite Mother's Shrine
(Ladies' bathroom was located here in 1938)


SIVA PURANAM
(From Manickavachakar's Tiruvachakam)
Transcribed by Prof K. Swaminathan

This is the first hymn in Tiruvachakam, which constitutes Part Eight of the Tamil Murai. The Tamil Murai, a compendium of devotional and mystic poetry by Shaivite saints consisting of twelve parts, is constantly studied and recited by devotees of Shiva.

Tiruvachakam was often quoted by Sri Bhagavan in his conversations with devotees.

Namah Sivaya:
Blessed be the Name, the Feet
They may not for one moment leave
My inmost heart!
Me, the best of teachers took
And made his own at Kogazhi;
And now as meaning in the Holy Books
He lives within me tasting sweet;
Blessed be His Feet.
The One, the Many, the Ruler immanent,
Who stilled the tumult of my mind
And has become my Master,
May His Feet prevail;
The God of gold who breaks
The chain of births.

Those flower-like Feet, unseen, afar,
To eyes averted, fill with bliss
Hearts open and hands clasped;
Yea, raise to lofty eminence
Heads in adoration bowed;
Praise His Feet
Praise the Lord, my Father, praise
Siva, the bright, the pure,
Whose dwelling place is love.¹
King who ends illusive birth;
Our God of prosperous Perundurai;
Hill of grace whence runs a hill
Perennial of joy.

Since He, this Siva, stands within my heart,
Now by His grace His gracious Feet
I shall worship, and with joyous mind,
So as to find
Final Freedom at last
From my own grievous past,
Recount the tale of His antiquity.

Yes. I would fain adore
The blinding brightness of those Feet
To which the Lord's compassionate glance
Beckoned me and I have come.
But I, a sinner, know not how to praise
Your might and majesty
That fill and overflow all heaven and earth,
As light, revealing light,
Boundless and beyond conception bright.

As boulder, grass, herb, tree,
Worm, reptile, diverse beasts and birds,
As man, as ghost and demon-host,
As monsters, sages, gods,
As every transient object fixt or moving,
Many have been the births I took
And tired of, till today, my Lord,
Truly your golden Feet beholding,
I have come home to Freedom.

¹ May also mean: 'Who in awareness deigns to dwell.'
God of Truth, immaculate,
Redeemer dwelling in my heart as OM,
Bull-rider whom the Vedas yearn for,
So high, deep, vast, minutely small
Burning and freezing; goal divine
Of every sacrifice;
Radiance bright
Driving out all error;
Gracious master of this witless servant
True knowledge putting ignorance to flight;
Uncreated, measureless, unending.
You create, sustain, destroy,
Conceal the worlds and rain down grace
Me you have seized and hold
In servitude to you.

Like fragrance subtle, far yet near,
The Vedas' import beyond speech and thoughts,
Like fresh milk, honey and candy mixt,
Like sweetness welling up in lovers' hearts,
Your bliss, my Master, makes immortal
Your devotees born mortal.

Your five-fold form you hid
From the adoring gods of heaven;
But to me revealed your Feet eternal
Condescending and descending
To the earth.

With ropes of right and wrong you bound
The darkness false surrounding me,
A hardened sinner,
Wrapped in skin the festering filth
Housed in a hovel with nine doors
Exposed to all the wiles of sense
This wretch with wayward mind and arid heart,
You comforted with more
THE MOUNTAIN PATH

Than a mother's love and care.
O Spotless light, expanding flame,
Splendour vast, immortal bliss;
Siva, King of Heaven;
Freedom snapping every bond!
Befriending me with grace and ending
Falsehood, hidden in the heart
Broad, brimming river of compassion,
Uncloying bliss; unbounded greatness;
Light that lurks in minds unthinking
Life of my life
That melts and makes me flow in love.
Compact of pain and pleasure,
And also free of both.
Lover of those who love you
Bright One present in all things
And beyond them all;
Lord of light and darkness dense,
Too vast for our beholding!
You that are and yet are not
The origin, the middle and the end!
Father who drew me magnet-like
And now as Master govern me!

Ultimate vision rarely seen
By keenest seekers truly wise!
Insight too subtle for our sensing
Holy One that neither comes nor goes,
And always there is never gained
Guardian and guiding light
Too bright for sight;
River of bliss in flood
Father, more than father;
Goodness all-transcending
All-illumining light; awareness beyond words
Appearing in this mutable universe
As multitudinous perceiving;
You are knowledge pure,  
The clarity of knowledge,  
The spring and fount of bliss  
Within my heart, O Master of this slave!

If once we pray and say,  
"No longer will I crouch content  
In this rotting house of flesh.  
O Master, Hara, come!"  
You will straight dismember  
This hovel by the wily senses built,  
And giving us the true Being bodiless  
Free us for ever from further birth on earth.  
Master dancing in dark midnight  
The dance of dissolution;  
Dancer too in Thillai 2 town  
Lord of the Pandyan South,  
Breaker of the cycle  
Of births affliction-filled.

Of Him beyond all speech  
Let us speak. To Him let us pray  
And at His hallowed Feet  
Sing this song, following well  
The meaning of the words we utter.  
Singing thus, we the fortunate shall dwell  
In Siva's city, our true home,  
Surrounded by adoring multitudes  
Bowing low at Siva's Feet,  
Adoring, bowing low!

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2 Chidambaram, where Siva appears as Nataraja and pure awareness in the heart.
Ramana Still Lives

By Arthur Osborne

It looks as if Sri Ramana Maharshi has passed away. But... has he?

We still remember him with all the love we are capable of, we still celebrate his Jayanti as a miracle of grace bestowed upon us. In short we still feel his vibrant presence. For the benefit and the reassurance of any who may feel doubts on the subject, I wish to record here that Bhagavan himself gave an answer to the question.

When the sickness that had gripped his body threatened already to be fatal, some devotees besought him to put it away from him and to will his recovery and continued life for their sake. Their plea was that they were utterly dependent on him, that they needed his continued grace and guidance and could not carry on their sadhana without him.

Bhagavan’s answer was curt and to the point. All that he said to them was: “You attach too much importance to the body.” This then is the final and conclusive answer, Bhagavan’s own answer to those who think that he lives in any less real way since the body’s death, that his guidance is in any way broken or weakened, that he is in any less complete sense the Sat-Guru; they attach too much importance to the body.

The grace at Arunachala is so potent, so vibrant today, so searching and intimate in its effect, that one wonders whether those who find a change in it have been there to see. Some there were who even formerly were insensitive to Bhagavan’s grace, but it is not a question of such people here, since he who complains of having lost a treasure must once have possessed it or at least part of it. Those who found nothing formerly can complain of having lost nothing now. And yet, those who really possessed the treasure know that they have lost nothing.

What, then, is the difference today? There is a difference, and its reality none can deny. Indeed, who most feel the present guidance are, on the whole, those who most enjoyed the graciousness of Bhagavan’s physical manifestation. The very receptivity to his grace which made them so susceptible to the beauty of his

From *The Call Divine*, Jayanti Number, 1953.
physical form, so apprehensive of losing it, in some cases even so despondent to think what would ensue, makes them now aware of his continued Presence. There is difference: the beloved voice is not heard nor the divine form seen; but this has become strangely unimportant to those who had thought they would feel it most. For they have found a lightness and a happiness in the very air of Tiruvannamalai, an immaculate peace beyond the rough handling of destiny, an immortal wealth despite their loss.

But is this the same as actual guidance by Bhagavan? It is, and in the most direct and personal way. Indeed the guidance seems more active now than formerly in those people who meditated little before but were contented rather to feast their eyes upon him and listen to the sound of his voice. They are now being drawn more and more to sit in silent meditation before the Samadhi and to gather together in the old hall redolent with his presence. As one sits there, it is nothing vague or diffused that one feels, but the same intense inner stirring, the same lifting up, the same blissful certainty that was felt under his watchful eye, there is the same variation from day to day in mode and potency of guidance, the same response to devotion and to any earnest plea for help.

But it may be asked, cannot this be felt elsewhere? Is Bhagavan now confined to Tiruvannamalai? He never was. His grace flowed out upon all who turned to him. To imply that the guidance was confined to Tiruvannamalai either now or formerly would indeed be attaching too much importance to the body. Now, as formerly, it is felt in the heart of the devotee independent of all outer aids; but it is also true that now, as formerly, there is great beauty and potency in a visit to Tiruvannamalai. Many have compared it to the recharging of their spiritual battery and the comparison is no less apt now than it used to be. Although Bhagavan goes out to all who invoke him, he is no less gracious now than formerly to those who make the effort to come to him at Tiruvannamalai. One feels there that he is pouring out an abundance of grace of which there are all too few recipients.

At the time of Jayanti we celebrate the birth of him who is deathless. Many are able to pay their homage at Tiruvannamalai as of old. Others gather together in groups in whatever town or country they may be; and some give praise alone with Bhagavan in the secrecy of their heart. Those who are sensitive and watch the signs feel that the force we now celebrate is waxing, not waning. It is true that a certain kind of numbness overtook many after the Master's apparent departure. But it was a purely temporary phenomenon. A gladness of response has replaced it. The guidance to which devotees respond is growing so potent, so intimate, that for any to deny its existence causes them the same surprise as if a blind man were to deny that the sun is shining.

"I am not going", Bhagavan said. "Where could I go? I am here." He is here at Tiruvannamalai, here in the hearts of his devotees. He is Bhagavan, the Inner Guru, the Self that guides to the Self.
Pericles, Prince Of Tyre

By Rosalind Christian

A medieval romance was the source of Shakespeare's play of this name, but the story may be far older. It was told again and again. John Gower, the English poet, retold it at the end of the fourteenth century, and he was followed by others. Shakespeare seems to have picked up another man's play or worked with a collaborator. Almost all the first two acts are agreed not to be his, but with Act III onwards he has clearly taken over.¹

The play begins in Antioch when Pericles, monarch of wealthy Tyre, has come to win the world's fairest woman, daughter of the tyrant Antiochus. Success is only to be won by the reading of a mysterious riddle. Many have failed and suffered execution. But Pericles can read the riddle which, to his horror, reveals the incestuous relationship of Antiochus and his daughter. Holding this dark secret, Pericles knows his life will be in constant danger. He flees in secret but nowhere is safe, not even his own kingdom.

The Prince is now a fugitive. He casts anchor at Tharsus where famine reigns and he does not hesitate to provision the stricken city, but he himself is now the victim of the sea's utmost cruelty. His ship and all in her are destroyed, except him alone, and barely alive he crawls onto an unknown shore. He has nothing but his sea-rusted armour, once the armour of a royal father. It is enough. Happily in this new land, Pentapolis, he wins esteem by his prowess in arms and mastery of music. The King's daughter, Thaisa, loves him and they are wed with great rejoicing.

News comes of the Tyrant's death and Pericles sets sail with his pregnant wife for Tyre. It is a land they are not destined to reach together. Struck by a mighty storm Thaisa dies in childbirth,

¹ All quotations of both text and comment are taken from The Arden Shakespeare edition of Pericles, edited by F.D. Hoeniger.
and, at the insistence of the crew, she is placed in a wooden coffer and cast into the waves. The ship is able to limp to Tharsus where Pericles consigns his new-born infant, Marina, to those he saved from death. They promise her every care.

Some fifteen years now pass and Marina is a maiden of extreme beauty and talent, but jealousy for her own daughter induces the Governor’s wife to order her murder on a lonely shore. Marina is saved by a marauding band of pirates, only to be sold into slavery. In Mytilene she is bought by the keeper of a brothel.

Pericles’ fortunes now reach their nadir. Anchoring at Tharsus, expecting to claim his daughter, he finds only a sumptuous tomb. Melancholy engulfs him utterly. His clothes become filthy and ragged. He scarcely eats and never speaks — but his ship, crew and friends sail on till one day they anchor at the port of Mytilene. The city’s governor comes aboard with friendly greetings. He and his nobles are appalled at what they see of the once great Pericles.

‘Sir’, says one,
‘We have a maid in Mytilene, I durst wager
Would win some words of him’.

The beauty of Marina’s voice forces the Prince to look at her. Her person arouses far memories of another loved face. The reunion of Pericles and Marina is one of the most moving scenes in Shakespeare, as moving as the great Lear-Cordelia passages. Overwhelmed by the surging emotions of despair and joy, Pericles falls asleep. In his dream the Goddess Diana appears before him bidding him sail to Ephesus and there, in her great temple, tell his story. In Ephesus, before the high altar, the play reaches its amazing climax.

We may discuss the symbolism of the play.

The bizarre scene at Antioch, with which the play opens, where oriental splendour and depravity mingle before Pericles’ eyes, is overshadowed by a row of grisly heads, all that remains of those who have died to win the world’s richest and fairest. ‘Severed heads’ are a recurring image in folklore. Are we to conclude that man is all too easily deluded by these two attributes, and dies many deaths before he learns to value sensuality and power at their true worth? Pericles recoils instantly. Behind beauty he sees sensuality and behind sensuality, death.

Earlier in his career Shakespeare had written a play, The Comedy of Errors, which comes to its climax in Ephesus. There father, mother and twin sons, long parted, find each other again. Using this play I have argued that Shakespeare believed in reincarnation, and knew, intuitively, that the ‘Twins’ (linked incarnations) of ancient story and myth symbolized this belief. Does the very different play Pericles carry the same message?

Hoeniger puts forward the suggestion that the Pericles story had a faraway an-

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cestor, The Odyssey — the return of Odysseus to his true wife through every vicissitude of storm, wreck and strange landings. Usually, of course, read as one man’s story, but bearing in mind the ‘Sea’-link with death and the ‘Land’ with life, could it also be read as the soul’s journey through many lifetimes back to the True Wife or Self? Such a thought may have occurred to Shakespeare and endeared the Pericles story to him.

A quaint facet points the same way. It is the device, used in the first two acts, of bringing back old Gower, the long-dead poet, to compere this episodic story. ‘The play’, writes Hoeniger, ‘is Gower’s narrative in visual form’ and ‘Gower reincarnates the medieval poet’ on stage. The device obviously appealed to Shakespeare and was sustained throughout the play.

Looking more closely we find some strange and suggestive bits of symbolism. Pericles crawls ashore at Pentapolis, spent and naked. He is clothed by some kindly fishermen. Before they set off to get food they haul in their net. Its weight gives hope of a good catch — but it contains nothing but Pericles’ armour! In all this are we not close to the ancient symbol of rebirth — the soul thrown naked on an alien shore? And closer still to the fish-net symbolism of ancient religion based on the net-like membrane (the caul) that surrounds the new-born? From a great ship it is strange that nothing is saved except one precious heirloom! We do know, however, that a good man has an inheritance that is never lost — his good karma. Interestingly there are those who think that this sea-shore passage has something of Shakespeare in it. The quaint humour of the fishermen has a Shakespearian ring.

Another striking clue appears in the next scene of Act II. Pericles joins the procession of knights who present their devices to Thaisa before the royal tournament. All these devices were then current except that of Pericles. Too poor to have a painted shield he carries his device, a withered branch topped with green and his motto In hac spe vivo, ‘In this hope I live’. This device is again one of the ancient symbols of rebirth — the dead branch which is yet quick with life defying every appearance. Was Pericles’ device Shakespeare’s own choice?

But this happiness won in Pentapolis is short-lived. All too soon his wife’s body is cast into the waves and he is left only with her memory. However, the coffer which carries her is cast onto the shore and taken to a house close by, the home of a physician of great renown, Ceremon. He sees that Thaisa is not dead but deeply unconscious.

Here we have one of the great scenes of the play, and, in its way, one of the strangest in Shakespeare. With warmth, fragrance, and above all gentle music, Ceremon draws Thaisa back to the shores of life. Thaisa returns from anguish, darkness and storm to a new life, as it were. She becomes a votaress in the Goddess Diana’s temple at Ephesus. It is there that Pericles’ little family is reunited.

As we watch Pericles we see that he acts well — flees evil, does good, accepts total loss with resignation, and, even stripped
of all his wealth, disguising even his name, wins through to renown and true love. But still Pericles is the victim of the angry gods—or so it seems. Hoeniger dismisses utterly the view that guilt must taint Pericles. Pericles is noble yet he suffers; such is Shakespeare's theme. Sri Maharshi would endorse Shakespeare's view. He himself said that it is the noblest who suffer most, and the words of Jesus endorse this, though he turns the proposition upside down. 'The wicked', he said, 'flourish like the bay-tree'.

Pericles bears every cross with fortitude and almost no word of complaint, but the sumptuous tomb he finds at Tharsus instead of the living girl he set out to meet breaks him utterly. He passes into a living death. Here we enter a situation that Shakespeare would love to use. We, the audience, know that mind has played Pericles a trick. All the tomb's florid trappings of death are a lie. It was the same in Errors when each and every participant in the Comedy firmly grasped the wrong end of the stick, and with it belaboured everybody else involved. Mind creates the errors and we laugh. In Pericles mind creates the tragedy, and we weep. It seems to me that one of the key messages of the play is that the tomb is always empty. All these monuments of gloom and grief are essentially a sham. However, Shakespeare has to lift the play onto a higher plane before he can tell us this.

Only once does Pericles reproach the gods, as he contemplates the body of his dead Queen.

Why do you make us love your goodly gifts
And snatch them straight away? We here below
Recall not what we give, and therein may
Use honour with you'.

That is, we may use our honour to remonstrate with the gods in this.

As I see it the gods are going to answer Pericles' heartfelt reproach. It is only the time-scale they use which conceals their honour. We may read this play as Hoeniger does as one of love, loss and recovery, but this hardly allays the human grief we feel at the death of loved ones. Suppose Thaisa's and Marina's deaths were not counterfeit — what then? Has Shakespeare a message for the bereaved? I suggest that with the constant intervention of the sea — the death element — he tries to tell us that there are many 'deaths' — but there are rebirths too. 'It is significant', writes Hoeniger that Pericles and Marina are reunited on the day of Neptune's festival, 'even if it is not possible to define this significance more precisely than to point out that there is one day in the year when Neptune's anger is allayed'. At this key point in the play we can say that the 'sea's' engulfing threat is rescinded. For a moment in time death is seen to be cancelled.

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3 Act III, Scene I. That is, we may use our honour to remonstrate with the gods in this.
Towards the end of Act V Pericles moves into a new dimension — a spiritual dimension. Neptune has played his part, but far more positive is the Goddess Diana’s role. Shakespeare brings his own spiritual experience to bear here. He can do so with safety as the gods had no spiritual status in Renaissance eyes. They were part of the vocabulary of the arts, very ancient but, of course, pagan.

Shakespeare puts experiences of ‘light’ into Pericles’ encounter with the Goddess — Goddess Argentine he calls her. Most interestingly he uses manifestations of sound also — a ‘sound’ that none but the Prince can hear — a soundless ‘sound’ through which he is carried to sleep and vision. Shakespeare gives Pericles some very interesting words to describe this sound.

Most heavenly music!
It nips me into list’ning, and thick slumber
Hangs upon mine eyes; let me rest.⁴

The nadis or inward sounds are, I suppose, the most difficult of subjective experiences to express. I am reminded of a passage in Chandra Swami’s Methods and Experiences.⁵ The Swami writes of some of the manifestations of light and sound that may come to the advanced sadhaka. Visions of a chosen god may also appear and have a sweet and soothing influence. Also, he continues, one may hear ‘a peculiar thrilling sound issuing from the real Heart centre in the middle of the chest and this quickly permeates the entire body like an electric current. It makes the sadhaka completely oblivious of the external world. After about fifteen minutes this sound is centralised in the ajna chakra and turns into a dazzling light. This is a very blissful experience’. Interestingly Shakespeare gives the ‘sound’ and then the ‘light’. The sight (darshan) of the Goddess allays all Pericles’ anguish and fear. Guided by Diana’s words he sets sail for Ephesus.

So the gods bring Pericles’ little family together at last but can we claim a wider meaning than this? Given the very pointed symbolism, I believe Shakespeare is telling us that we experience a long birth-death cycle. Maharshi in a humorous passage agreed. “As people would be scared away if I said that spiritual practices had to be done for several births, I tell them, ‘You have liberation already within you: you have merely to rid yourselves of exterior things that have come upon you’ . . . even so the ancients have not said all this for nothing.”⁶ Shakespeare with no circle of devotees could write in a sense solely for himself — and for the future. He is also telling us that, given true love, we will encounter our dear ones along the way. Maharshi also promised the same boon to two grief-stricken parents. We can only assume that Shakespeare had an inner conviction of the truth of this belief. Nothing is lost,

⁴ Act V, Scene 1. ‘Nips’, writes Hoeniger is a very unusual word and to express it suggests ‘compels’, but ‘nips’ is a very apt word for an inwardly heard sound.
⁵ The Mountain Path, July 1969.
the wise ones tell us —and Shakespeare would, I believe, agree; but he also knew that great sacrifice and suffering had to be endured before the 'lost' were found.

Perhaps we should look at the two women for a moment. The child Marina, snatched from death by storm, is recognizedly a symbol of renewal; just as she is also the symbol of the triumph of purity and steadfastness against the basest cruelty and greed. But Thaisa’s part seems very small, dwindling in the second half of the play into almost nothing. But we should perhaps pause here and wonder whether it was not her life of dedication in a holy place which worked much of this magic!

The threatening sound of the sea, and man’s living aspirations expressed in music, alternate throughout the play. The result is a dream-like quality drawing our gaze down long vistas of time. Contemplating the face of his new-found daughter, Pericles says,

Yet thou dost look
Like Patience gazing on Kings’ graves, and smiling
Extremity out of act.7

A famous Shakespeare scholar writes of these words, ‘We remember Viola’s “Patience on a monument smiling at grief” (Twelfth Night, V,1); but these lines hold deeper penetration. The whole world of tragedy (“Kings’ graves”) is subdued by an over-watching figure, like Cordelia’s love by the bedside of Lear’s sleep. “Extremity”, that is disaster in all its finality (with perhaps a further suggestion of endless time), is therefore negated, put out by action, by a serene assurance corresponding to St. Paul’s “O death where is thy sting?” Patience is here an all-enduring calm, seeing through tragedy to the end; smiling through endless death to everlasting eternity’.8

ATTACHMENT

Those fools, who are bound to the sense-objects by the strong chord of attachment which is difficult to snap, come, depart, go up and down, carried quickly by the powerful emissary of their own actions.

The deer, the elephant, the moth, the fish and the black bee — these five meet with death, each through its own attachment to sound, etc., by one or the other of the five senses. What more should be said of man who is attached to all the five.

A sense-object is more virulent in its evil effect than the poison of even a king cobra. Poison kills one who swallows it; but the other one kills one who even looks at it.

— Shankara, Viveka Chudamani.
Sri Niranjanananda Swami, familiarly known as Chinna Swami, the younger brother of Sri Bhagavan, was for over thirty years the sole manager (Sarvadhikari) of the Ashram and has thus earned for himself a unique place among his devotees. If all devotees had, following Mary rather than Martha, chosen the way of meditation and neglected practical affairs and the call of work and service, there would have been a yawning chasm in Sri Bhagavan’s story, not the abundance and the fullness which we now take for granted. If the chasm is not there and if the Ashram came into being and functioned and continues to function fittingly as a hospitable home for devotees and, an active centre for spreading his teachings, the credit for it all belongs to Sri Niranjanananda Swami. He carried on with unwearied zeal the noble task of attending to Sri Bhagavan’s devotees and publishing his works and also other books on his life and teachings. These tasks called for a stalwart and single-minded karma yogi. And Chinna Swami with the majestic stature and steadfast firmness of a De Gaulle or a “Roman Emperor” as some Western devotees loved to name him, met the need almost unaided and thus proved to be the best karma yogi among Sri Bhagavan’s devotees.

He was greatly devoted to his mother and his notable service to her expanded naturally into service to the Ashram. After the Mahasamadhi of the mother in 1922 the Ashram grew up steadily. Bhagavan’s Hall, the dining hall and the gosala were all constructed one by one under his supervision. The kumbhabhishekam of the Mother’s shrine in 1949 was the crowning event of all his efforts. Such tasks needed money, material and skilled manpower in a big way. The success in securing these resources and utilising them wisely was due almost entirely to the zeal, the sense of responsibility and untiring diligence of Swamiji. With these qualities, he set a good example himself and provided inspiration to willing and enthusiastic devotees who helped him in building up and running a big institution. Above all, his absolute dedication to Sri Bhagavan and his unwavering faith were his mainstay and support. He told devotees who were in close contact with him that he did not imagine that he was the doer of all this. It was entirely Sri Bhagavan’s work in which he was only an instrument. His strength sprang from his humility!

Other achievements of his are the acquisition of the house at Tiruchuzhi in which Sri Bhagavan was born, and the house at Madurai where he lived as a.

From Venkatoo 60 (Souvenir).
schoolboy and realized the Self. Regular puja to Sri Bhagavan is being performed at these holy spots since their acquisition by the Ashram. They have now become places of pilgrimage for devotees of Sri Bhagavan.

While he thus laboured hard in Bhagavan’s service, it was all done as worship. He held Bhagavan in highest reverence and his personal relationship with him was never assumed or brought in. He earned the reputation of being a stern task-master. In his situation no one could have been otherwise. He deemed it a great privilege, for others as for himself, to serve Bhagavan and fellow-devotees. Because of this firm belief he often called upon devotees to assist him in administrative tasks. For him serving Bhagavan and his devotees was a means for attaining the highest spiritual good. To the last he kept up this attitude of absolute surrender and that was the secret of his success!

Since taking up sannyasa in the presence of Bhagavan, he conducted himself as a sannyasin should. He went for bhiksha (begging for food) to the town, as advised by Bhagavan. Often he did the cooking for the ashramites when the kitchen attendants did not turn up. There was no hesitation on his part to do any work in the Ashram. Later, with his son and close relatives around, it was no easy job to maintain the ideal and attitude of a sannyasin, but he succeeded even here. The son and other relatives could not claim any greater privilege than the other devotees. On many occasions he had come out with specific instructions regarding what should and should not be done by them in the Ashram. He impressed upon them that the duty they owed to the Ashram was all the greater because of their relationship with Bhagavan and that they should not on that account claim any special privileges!

Sri Swamiji had a clear understanding of the tenets of Bhagavan’s teaching and was particularly fond of Bhagavan’s Arunchala Ashtakam (Eight Verses on Arunachala), full of devotional fervour and profound philosophic thought. His last days were spent in perfect peace, undisturbed by anything mundane. His last moments were so serene that they seemed to justify his faith that Bhagavan would take complete charge of those who serve him with utter self-surrender in whatever way they could.

Feeling that his end was near, on the 28th January, 1953, he called Sri T. N. Venkataraman, his family and Ashram devotees, and with thick speech, said: “I am departing with a clear conscience and clean hands. I have not used even a pie of the Ashram funds for my own benefit. Everything here belongs to Bhagavan, and should be guarded with care and vigilance. Devote yourselves heart and soul to the service of the Lord, and in return He will shower His grace on you. Be sincere and truthful to the core of your being. Uphold our revered ancient tradition in the working of this Ashram, as I have upheld them all my life”.

Thus he lived a dedicated life, combining in himself the virtues of a true devotee, a model administrator and an ideal sannyasin.
Worship of Sri Bhagavan’s Sandals

By Suri Nagamma

The following episode recorded by the author in her Letters from Sri Ramanasramam (as entry for 26 March 1949) shows the uniqueness of Chinnaswamigal’s devotion to Sri Bhagavan.

There was another event on the morning of the 20th instant. Sri Giddaluri Sambasiva Rao decided to do pada puja (ceremonial worship to holy persons) to Sri Niranjanananda Swami in the new hall facing Matrubhuteswara temple. He brought new ochre robes and all the materials required for pada puja. He requested Sri Bhagavan to be present and told him of his intentions. He then prevailed upon Niranjanananda Swami to come; he brought him there with a number of brahmins and made him sit on a dais in the centre of the hall. Overwhelmed with feelings of humility, Niranjanananda Swami said, “So you all want to catch me napping. Enough of your devotion. I will not agree to this worship. Pada puja is only for those who do not have the sense of ego. I am not worthy of it”. So saying, he got down and squatted on the floor. Sambasiva Rao however would not allow him to go, and began pressing him. Swami was in a dilemma. In those embarrassing circumstances, his face suddenly lit up. Something occurred to him. With a tremulous voice, he said, looking at the students of the patasala, “So it means, you will not leave me alone; Bhagavan’s sandals are near that Linga; bring them; do puja to them”.

A devotee had brought those sandals with silver plating before the kumbhabhishekam and had given them to the Ashram. They were touched by Bhagavan’s feet and placed near the Linga to be worshipped. In accordance with the orders of the Sarvadhikari, after Sambasiva Rao had done abhishekam, Swami cleaned them with a cloth and replaced them on the plate with a cloth and replaced them on the plate with great reverence. After the usual puja was performed, the ochre clothes were placed on the sandals and the plate containing them was handed over to Niranjanananda Swami.

He received it, touched the sandals with his eyes and accepted the clothes as prasadam. While doing so he said, “Look, I have accepted the puja of the sandals this time because of your pressing request. This should never be done by anybody else. Things of this nature should never be done in the presence of Bhagavan”.

Therese of Lisieux,
the Great Carmelite Saint

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

St. Therese, the great Carmelite saint (1873-1897) is universally known as St. Therese of the Child Jesus. So strongly did she identify herself with Jesus Christ. In 1895 Sister Therese was ordered by Sister Agnes of Jesus to write down the memoirs of her childhood. Sister Agnes, previously known as Pauline, happened to be an elder sister of Therese. Showing proper obedience, as every nun should, Therese wrote intermittently during her short periods of leisure, which were usually in the evenings, sitting on a bench with a discarded old writing-case on her knees. The light was inadequate and her small paraffin lamp no longer worked properly. It was under such awful conditions that she had to do her writing. To these memoirs she added the story of her later years. These writings were posthumously published as The Story of a Soul (Histoire d'une âme).

It must be remembered that this self-revealing account was recorded in the evening of her life when she was very weak and ill and dying; it was originally intended to be a family album but today it is a treasured theological testament. Her pencil dropped from her frail hand after writing 'love' which, significantly, is the last word of her autobiography. This book is widely read and translations of it continue to be well received. Therese's fame has spread everywhere and she has become an object of religious veneration.

Born at Alencon on January 2nd 1873, Marie Francoise Therese was the youngest daughter of Zelie-Marie Guerin and a watchmaker and jeweller called Louis Martin, whose poor health had been a serious hindrance to his desire to become a monk. Five of their daughters

The bulk of the quotations in this article are from Therese of Lisieux, Autobiography of a Saint; translated by Ronald Enox, London: The Harvill Press, 1958. Where the quotes are from other books, the source is specifically mentioned.
Therese of Lisieux, the Great Carmelite Saint

Became nuns. When, at the age of fifteen, Therese entered the Carmelite convent of Lisieux (Normandy), two of her own sisters were already there. Therese lived at Alencon until the age of four when her mother died of breast cancer in 1877. Later in the same year the family moved to a house called Les Buissonnets at Lisieux.

She wrote that perfection consists in doing the will of God. Throughout history various tyrants and dictators and unscrupulous politicians have also claimed that they were simply giving expression to the will of the Supreme. By this means they were able to justify their various vain-glorious wrongdoings, cruelties and injustices. Anyone can claim to represent the will of God, but only saints, on account of the purity of their lives and the clarity of their visions, can be absolutely sure that their wills are identical with the will of the Divine.

Once, the little child affectionately flung her arms round her mother and openly wished that she were dead! "Oh, poor little mother, I do wish you'd die," said Therese. Thereupon the lady scolded her daughter. "Oh," remarked Therese, showing a genuine concern for her mother, "but it's only because I want you to go to heaven: you told me yourself one can't go to heaven without dying". This amusing incident illustrates not only the childlike nature of the girl but also her interest in her mother's spiritual welfare.

After her mother's demise, Therese's character underwent a total change. The little child became shy, quiet and oversensitive. Such was her self-effacing nature that "merely to be looked at made me burst into tears; I was happy only when nobody was paying any attention to me". How different from most children who long to be the centre of attention!

It is interesting that the first word she learned to read was "Heaven". Even as a child of seven or eight she was strangely aware of the existence of a Higher Power. When her father took her to Trouville, Therese had her first sight of the sea which made such a profound impression on her that she said, "I couldn't take my eyes off it, its vastness, the ceaseless roaring of the waves, spoke to me of the greatness and the power of God." Once the sky became overcast and there was a flash of lightning with thunder. Instead of becoming frightened, Therese was delighted and God seemed so near to her. She was having a tremendous feeling for that which lies hidden behind the world of forms. In other words, she was having experiences of the divine essence through the instrumentality of nature.

Eager to enter Carmel as soon as possible, the little Therese went to see the Mother Prioress. Mother Marie de Gonzague told her that she could not take postulants of nine years. She was advised to wait until she was sixteen. Thereupon Therese told God many times that it was solely for His sake that she wanted to be a Carmelite. She cherished the hope of becoming a Carmelite some day.

The history of the Carmelites can be traced back to the 12th century when a
A crusader and ten companions established themselves as hermits on Mount Carmel near the cave of the great Hebrew Prophet Elijah. This prophet is generally regarded as the father and founder of the Carmelite Order. It was St. Teresa of Avila (1515-82), the Spanish Carmelite nun, who considerably restored the order. Its motto is “I am all zeal for the honour of the Lord God of hosts” (Zelo Zelatus Sum Pro Domino Deo Exercituum).

St. Teresa of Avila insisted that the followers of her reformed order should wear sandals and coarse linen habits; they must sleep on mattresses of straw, eat no meat, and on certain fast days take neither milk nor eggs. They have to live on alms with no regular income. Praying and doing penance for their sins are two important practices of these austere contemplatives. They set the greatest store on mental prayer. Working is part of the Carmelite life. They eat together to promote brotherly love but do not work together since such gatherings might result in their silence being broken. Each Carmelite is required to work separately and live alone in a cell, meditating day and night on God. The Virgin Mary figures prominently in their devotions. These pious persons of prayer and solitude distance themselves from mundane matters.

In the course of their spiritual evolution many a saint has been harassed by all the pressures of the Devil. But satanic obstacles to spiritual progress have often proved counterproductive. Such hindrances have had the effect of strengthening the resolve of the God-fearing. It is amusing but it is true that the Devil has unknowingly served as a catalyst for spiritual transformation. All the mischievous manoeuvres of the Evil One tend to misfire whenever a pure soul turns towards the Perfect One.

When Therese fell ill she believed that it was the Devil’s work. Her sister Pauline’s entry into Carmel had angered Satan who was eager for revenge. Therese suffered from continual headaches but she continued to do her school work. The poor girl had a strange fit of trembling and she shivered throughout the night. Her relations looked after her with loving care. Therese maintained that she was subjected to this torment until she entered Carmel because “Almighty God meant to purify and above all to humble me”. It seemed to Therese that although Satan had been granted power over the outward part of herself, he could not approach either her soul or mind.

Therese was very sick and suffered from a nervous illness. Her sisters Leonie and Celine knelt beside her bed and prayed before a statue of the Virgin. Suddenly Therese had an extraordinary experience. She noticed that the statue took on an appearance of supernatural beauty and there was also an expression of kindness and pity on her face. The Madonna’s entrancing smile pierced her heart and tears rolled down Therese’s cheeks and she instantly recovered from her illness. Therese was so happy that the statue of Our Lady had actually smiled at her in this way. What happened was miraculous.
Therese's love for pictures awakened within her the love of holiness; her love of books was so great that she could have spent her entire life reading. Although romantic stories made her forget reality, she soon understood that the only glory is the one that is eternal. She desired to do good in a way that did not draw attention to herself. Impressed by the heroism and the sense of divine inspiration of French women such as Joan of Arc, she liked to emulate them. She felt that she was born for greatness but it would be incorrect to think that Therese was vain. "I must devote myself to becoming a great saint," she wrote, "that sounds conceited, of course, when you consider how imperfect a creature I was, and still am ... But this daring ambition of aspiring to great sanctity has never left me".

When a mistress at the Abbey asked her what she did with herself when on holiday, Therese answered that she got behind her bed where there was an empty space and then shut herself away with curtains. There she thought about God, life and eternity. Therese was in fact practising mental prayer without realising what she was doing.

During her first communion and confirmation, Therese was so full of joy that, like a drop of water that gets merged in the sea, she felt that she had disappeared, and only Jesus, her Master and King, was left. In this state of union tears of happiness poured down her cheeks. Later that day she experienced an undisturbed peace in her soul. That was the beginning of her everlasting communion in Heaven. The following day she felt sad because, although Therese had received lots of mere material gifts, including a lovely dress, nothing but the Lord's presence was going to make her happy.

Therese, despite treating her tide of happiness as one of the greatest graces that she ever received, was now increasingly drawn to suffering. She had suffered in the past but there had been no love of suffering. Enduring suffering is one thing but gladly inviting it is another. So often at communion she found herself effortlessly repeating, "O my God, Thou sweetness ineffable, make bitter for me all carnal comfort".¹

Therese was a good student at school and almost always came out top. Not being particularly fond of games, she would lean against a tree, deep in thought. She loved the catechism; history and essay-writing were her best subjects. Because of her affectionate nature she could not help forming friendships but found, alas, that the love bestowed on us by other human beings was so limited and fickle. After leaving school at the age of thirteen, Therese's education continued; she took private lessons with Madame Papinau. Her knowledge of the world improved.

Therese developed an increasing disenchantment with human beings that brought with it a corresponding closer relationship with the Divine. "Our Lord," she stated, "was my only real Friend, the

¹ The Imitation of Christ, III. XXVI, 3.
only Person I could really talk to; I found human conversation cloying, even when it was about holy things. Talking to God, I felt, is always better than talking about God”.

According to Therese it was on December 25th 1886, after midnight mass, that she was given the grace of complete conversion. It marked the beginning of the third and best period of her life that was rich in heavenly graces. In a single instant the Lord changed her for Therese felt a great desire to work for the conversion of sinners. One Sunday Therese was very moved when she saw a picture of the crucifixion with blood flowing from one of Jesus’ hands. Then she burned with the longing to save the souls of obstinate sinners. For instance, when she heard that a man called Pranzini had just been condemned to death because of his appalling crimes, Therese was rather apprehensive that he might die impenitent. She therefore desired to save the poor man from the fires of hell. She prayed and asked God to pardon this unfortunate soul. Just for her own satisfaction, Therese was also keen for the man to show some sign of his own repentance. Her prayer was answered. For just before the condemned prisoner mounted the scaffold and put his head between the bars of the guillotine, he made good use of the crucifix that the priest was holding out to him. The sinner penitentially kissed the crucifix thrice. She remembered the words of Jesus that “joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance”. Pranzini was for Therese “the first child of my prayers”. Thereafter her longing to save souls grew and became stronger with each day that passed.

Great was her thirst for knowledge and she liked to read especially in the fields of history and science but, influenced by the chapter of The Imitation of Christ that refers to unnecessary curiosity, Therese carefully controlled her strong desire for gathering information. She knew by heart nearly all the chapters of this little book that she always carried with her. It says that God manifests Himself as a blaze of light or a veil of symbols and figures. The veil that hid Him from the sight of Therese and her sister Celine seemed light and transparent. It was by means of love that they found Him who is their Bridegroom.

Therese was given the cold shoulder whenever she referred to her Carmelite ambitions. Members of her family, except Celine, tried to dampen her enthusiasm. She regarded the life of a Religious as her only true vocation. How was Therese, the favourite daughter of her papa, going to break the news to him? Had he not already given away his three eldest daughters to this monastic order? She chose Pentecost as the special occasion for informing her father about it. Throughout that day she requested the Apostles to pray for her. Therese was successful in obtaining her papa’s

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permission to enter Carmel at fifteen. He cried out, "What an honour God is doing me, in asking me like this, for the gift of one daughter after another!" Her uncle refused to grant her permission at first. Eventually to her surprise he stated that he would not come in the way of her plans for he had asked God and consequently there was now an answer to his prayer. She realised that the miracle had already happened when her uncle declared that Therese "was a flower God had decided to pick while it was still in the bud".

The happiness of the adolescent was short-lived. Therese was surprised and disappointed when she learnt that the ecclesiastical superior of the convent would admit her only after she was twenty-one! This new obstacle in the way of Therese was put by a priest (the bishop's delegate). He was quite determined in his purpose. But she did not lose courage. When Therese, accompanied by papa and Celine, went to meet him, they were all given a cold reception. He said that if the bishop approved of her entering Carmel he would have nothing more to say. It then occurred to her that she could lead a Carmelite life while staying at home. But when leaving the presbytery, Therese tearfully remarked that if the bishop were to prevent her from entering Carmel at fifteen she would be going to the Pope himself!

Meanwhile, she continued studying and took lessons in embroidery. But all the time her love of God kept on increasing.

Their hopes were high when Therese and papa went to meet the bishop. God, she believed, gave her special grace to overcome her shyness. It was only the love of the Lord that was enabling her to cope with the difficulties of the present and the future. Therese told the bishop that ever since the age of reason she had wanted to be a nun and Carmel was the one place where her soul longed to be. Considering the matter from her father's point of view, the bishop raised the question whether the girl ought not to stay at home and care for her papa instead. But the bishop was very impressed when the father himself took her side and pleaded her case. Then the bishop said that he must discuss it with the Father Superior. The bishop suggested her going to Rome in order to strengthen her resolution.

The journey to Rome entailed seeing sights of great beauty and piety, besides treading the sacred ground of the Apostles and the martyrs. It widened her outlook. Their pilgrimage to Rome started with a tour of Paris. The highlight of the Parisian tour was a visit to Notre Dame des Victoires. Therese knelt and wept in front of the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Therese felt then that Our Lady was assuring her that previously she had really smiled at her and effected her cure. Therese knew that the Virgin was watching over her. She also realised that she was the child of Our Lady.

In Rome Therese was thrilled to see the Colosseum, the famous arena wherein many martyrs had been put to death. Therese's heart was beating fast as she
kissed the dust that had been sanctified by the blood of the early Christians. During the course of their visit to the Catacombs, Therese and Celine crept down to the bottom of St. Cecilia’s tomb to take away some of the hallowed earth as a souvenir. St. Cecilia was the patroness of music. Even on her wedding day, amidst the celebrations, the girl Cecilia had sat apart and sung to God in her heart, God being the heavenly Bridegroom who lives within. Therese felt a special devotion for St. Cecilia.

Therese went to the Pope’s own chapel in the Vatican. The holy father said mass with devotion. Her heart was beating fast, but some splendid words in the gospel made her feel confident: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”. Therese thought: Would not the kingdom of Carmel soon be mine?

She saw the Pope as he was seated on a large armchair surrounded by cardinals, archbishops and bishops. One by one the pilgrims knelt, kissed his foot and hand and thereafter received his benediction. Next it was her turn. When the Pope held out his hand, Therese clasped it and said tearfully, “Most Holy Father, I’ve a great favour to ask of you ... in honour of your jubilee I want you to let me enter the Carmelite order at fifteen.” With a kindly expression he said: “Very well, my child, do what your superiors tell you”. While putting her hands on his knees, she decided to try her luck by saying, “Yes, but if you’d say the word, Most Holy Father, everybody would agree”. Thereupon the Pope declared, “All’s well, all’s well; if God wants you to enter, you will.” Therese wished to continue the conversation but two members of the papal guard forcibly lifted her up and had to carry her away. Meanwhile, the Pope blessed her by putting his hand to her lips and raising it; he followed her with his eyes. Disappointed, Therese wept. Her distressed father tried to console her but without much success. As her mission to Rome had left her with a feeling of failure she was no longer interested in her journey. Yet she resigned herself to the fact that it was the accomplishment of God’s will.

In the past Therese had indulged in the fancy of offering herself as a toy or plaything to the Child Jesus. She

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imagined that she was just a ball of no value with which He was free to do anything that He liked. Now, alas, the poor girl felt that the ball had been brushed aside.

Therese might not have known that the theme of the lila or the play of the Divine is a popular one in Hindu thought. The ways of the Lord are beyond our powers of comprehension. Swami Ramdas (1884-1963) expressed the view that "God is the one, formless, changeless, everlasting Reality. He is the only Truth. The worlds we see are nothing but the fleeting forms assumed by Him for His lila or cosmic play".

Therese cried when she learned that she was at last going to be admitted to the order, but only after Lent. It was painfully clear that it meant waiting for another three months. What an ordeal! She desired to devote this period to a "recollected and mortified way of life". She was not referring to penitential practices — never in her life had she done them. Instead she tried to crush her self-will that craved to do what it liked; to keep down her retorts, to do kind deeds without regarding them as being important and to sit bolt upright instead of reclining on her chair. The night before she entered Carmel the entire family gathered round the table and said their fond farewells. It brought out the sacrifice that is involved in separation from loved ones.

After entering Carmel Therese experienced a refreshing sense of peace that never left her even when she had severe trials. The charming convent was cut off from the world and she loved her little cell. In a strict sense the cell was not hers but belonged to the Carmelite community who all observed the vow of religious poverty. Suffering came her way; she did not shun suffering but was attracted to it.

Therese made her general confession to her director Father Pichon. He told her that she had never committed a single mortal sin, thanks to the mercy of the Almighty; he added that had she been left to herself she would not be a little angel any longer but a little demon. Conscious of her own imperfections, Therese did not find it difficult to accept his statement.

One day during their recreation an older nun remarked smilingly that Therese might not have a great deal to confide to her superiors as her soul was characterised by such simplicity. "Nearness to God," said the Mother, "always makes us simple". Yet for Therese the difficulty in opening out was a great trial as she was not used to talking about her soul.

The priest who took Therese under his charge went abroad; she received only an annual letter from him in reply to her monthly missives. Hence at Carmel her Director was none other than the Lord Himself. Therese, the little wild flower on the hillside of Carmel, thrived under the shadow of the Cross; it was watered by Jesus' tears and blood and His face was the sun. Her only yearning was "to suffer and to remain unnoticed". Such was Therese's self-denial and self-annihilation.

After having been a Religious for seven years, Therese complained that there was
nothing of the saint about her. Filled with remorse over her dryness in prayer, Therese self-critically stated that her practice of going through her prayers and thanksgivings mechanically, cannot be excused. Yet she did not regret it, considering how little children fall asleep under their parents’ loving eyes. God knows that we are only dust. She felt that the Lord, without her knowing it, was showing her the right way of acting in accordance with His will. For the “Lord dwells unseen in the depths of my miserable soul”.

One day the devil called into question Therese’s suitability for life at Carmel. She found herself in an agonising quandary. She wanted to conform to God’s will, even if that meant returning to the world that she had already renounced; such a course of action seemed preferable to acting in accordance with her own will and consequently staying at Carmel. Confused, she spoke to the Novice-mistress about it. Her doubts relating to her vocation disappeared the moment she expressed them. Perhaps Satan had hoped that she would not bring herself to expressing those doubts, but her humility — Therese’s willingness to make such humiliatingly self-revealing disclosures — caused the defeat of the spirit of evil.

Memorable indeed was the wedding of her soul to the Lord. It was a red-letter day for Therese. In a sense all her life had been a preparation for the morning of September 8th 1890 when she took her vows. A sense of inner peace accompanied the taking of her vows. She asked for graces and prayed for the members of her family. “I felt,” declared Therese, “that I had the privileges of a queen, who can use her influence to set prisoners free, and reconcile the king to his rebellious subjects; I wanted to empty Purgatory, and convert sinners everywhere”.

This tender and compassionate wish of hers to intercede for humanity with the Divine is not without significance. Her wanting to change the course of sinners’ lives by directing them towards the Lord was a sign of her own spirituality and altruism. It is most remarkable that Therese was already having all the makings of a great saint.

Even towards the latter part of her beautifully written autobiography, Therese returned to the question of suffering which is one of its favourite themes. Turning our backs on suffering is our conditioned response to any painful situation. But Therese maintained that spiritual motherhood can be gained only by accepting suffering. She invoked scripture to illustrate the teaching that “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy”. It is abundantly clear that Jesus was advocating the renunciation of the world when He declared: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal”.

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4 Psalm 126:5.
5 John 12:24-25.
earthly exile" she was hinting at the unavoidable unhappiness that is part and parcel of living on earth. Our lives are marked by a series of miseries. There will be unalloyed happiness only in Heaven, provided we succeed in gaining admission to that celestial realm.

When Therese was seventeen or eighteen all the illumination and spiritual food she needed was found in the writings of St John of the Cross (1542-91), the Spanish mystic who with St Teresa of Avila founded the order of Carmelites. After that, she saw that all spiritual books were dry — they did not hold any interest for her. However she escaped from this attitude by reading the gospels and The Imitation of Christ wherein she discovered "solid wholemeal nourishment". It is the gospels that occupied her mind during prayer. In them she was always finding new and hidden insights. That experience enabled her to understand the meaning of the saying that "The Kingdom of God is within you". Without resorting to books or teachers the Lord instructs souls. Does not the Teacher of teachers teach without uttering a word? "I never heard the sound of His voice", observed Therese, "but I know that He dwells within me all the time". Thus, without using either her five senses or her intellect, Therese mystically knew about the existence of the Eternal within herself.

Therese's nine years as a Carmelite nun were not particularly eventful. Much of her time was devoted to daily routine matters that are incidental to living in a religious community. She was required to work and pray and observe the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Besides, the young woman had to cope with all the strains of her failing health.

In Therese's autobiography there is unfortunately a lack of great detail about her inner life after she entered Carmel. For the account of her short lifespan of a mere twenty-four years is mostly confined to the period prior to her becoming a Carmelite. Therese must have sent about 50 letters to her director Father Pichon after he went to Canada. It is a pity that Father Pichon failed to keep any of these reports on her spiritual development. That is a great loss. Nevertheless it is possible to get some idea of her soul's progress by surveying some significant incidents during her monastic life.

There was a long period of inner suffering in the life of Therese when her dear father was taken mentally ill. In his imagination he saw slaughter and battles. Next he grabbed his revolver to defend his relatives. Fortunately several persons disarmed him. The sick man was confined to the Bon Sauveur asylum at Caen. When Therese was on the verge of a nervous breakdown she became the recipient of a remarkable grace. Inside a grotto in the garden Therese had a spiritual experience. She felt as if she were completely hidden under the veil of the Beloved Virgin. At that time Therese was in charge of the refectory. She remembered doing various things as though she were not actually doing them. She felt as if

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novices. Her self-effacing nature was such that Therese did not desire to advance in the hierarchy of the Carmel. She was content to stay always at the bottom of the ladder as a woman of no importance. It shows her determination to eliminate her ego. For never does the ego stop craving for promotion, recognition, power and glory.

When making a study of the life and heroic actions of Joan of Arc (1412-31), Therese felt within herself the same burning zeal that had once animated Joan. This experience, which is so suggestive of a state of grace, made Therese think that she had been born for glory. It was not the mundane glory of the vainglorious. God made Therese understand that her glory, which would remain invisible to mortal eyes, would consist in her becoming a great saint herself.

In 1894, just three years before her demise, Therese was engaged in much self-examination. As her understanding of the great saints increased, she became sadly conscious of the wide gap that existed between their saintly lives and hers. She became distressingly aware of her several imperfections such as her tendency to fall asleep when praying. Was she not just an obscure grain of sand? Sometimes she was disillusioned with herself. Then she would recall her resolution that had been made at the time of her first communion — Never be discouraged! Therese meditated on her predicament and she prayed. She used to do a lot of reading. She came upon several biblical lines that made a deep impact on her mind: “Let all who are simple come in here!”

But what would the Lord do to the simple who came to Him?

The answer to this question is as follows: “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you”.8

In the light of this knowledge it occurred to Therese that the Divine can be seen only by being simple.

In 1895 Therese offered herself as a sacrificial victim to merciful love. It was the apex of her spiritual quest. In the manner of Jesus, she desired to save souls on earth and also to liberate those who suffer in purgatory. Her religious fervour was rising and she was ready to play the role of redeemer. She wanted to become a martyr of God’s love, causing her to die so that her soul flew and entered the fold of God’s merciful love. Once she felt an extraordinarily intense love for the Lord. Therese was ablaze with the fire of love. She felt that she would not be able to bear this burning sensation for one second longer without passing away. This rare mystical experience was the culmination of a lifetime of commitment to the bhakti marga (devotional path) that Therese diligently and unceasingly followed. It is the way whereby the divinely dedicated devotee’s spark of love is at long last reunited with the eternal flame of the Beloved.

Therese’s writings abound in aphorisms about the spiritual life. Here are some samples from her soul-searching autobiography: “Our Lord Himself con-

7 Proverbs. 9: 4 NIV.
8 Isaiah. 66:13 NIV.
descends to dwell in the depths of my heart.” “God repays us a hundredfold, in small things as in great, if we give up everything for Him.” “Nothing matters except trying to do God’s will with utter resignation.”

As Therese was lying ill at the infirmary during the last months of her life, the very statue of the “Virgin with the smile” was kept by her side. She was suffering from tuberculosis; it was an agonisingly painful experience. These were the sad circumstances under which the following last poem of hers was composed. The lines reveal that the heart of this pure soul was overflowing with devotion. The poem is entitled *Why I love Thee, O Mary*.

Soon I shall hear that sweet harmony,
Soon in those lovely Heavens I shall see Thee.
Thou Who, in the morning of my life, camest to smile at me,
Do come and smile at me again...Mother...now the nigh is nigh!...
I fear no more the splendour of Thy glory most high,
With Thee I have suffered many trials before
And now I want to sing on Thy lap, O Mary sweet and mild,
To sing why I love Thee and to tell Thee forevermore:
I am Thy child!...

The nun’s religious fervour is particularly evident in her poetry. Those sweet and simple lyrical lines from Therese’s pen are part of her spiritual legacy to future generations.

A doctor made the diagnosis on August 17th 1897 that her tuberculosis had reached its final stage; the illness had spread to the entire body, including the intestines. Her suffering was acute. On August 27th only half her left lung was usable for breathing. The congestion remained and the patient had fever. On September 30th 1897 around 7.20 in the evening Therese passed away. While looking at her crucifix, she said “Oh! I love Him ... My God ... I love Thee! ...” These were her last words.

In the graveyard at Carmel her mortal remains were buried with a wooden cross over her grave:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sister Therese of the Child Jesus 1873-1897</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Later Therese was epitaphed in her own unforgettable words:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shall spend my Heaven doing good upon earth</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When her health was deteriorating Therese prophesied that she would serve the world after her demise.

**Summing-up**

Therese’s autobiography, which first appeared one year after her death, became not only a great religious classic of inspirational value but also a best-seller. Some readers were converted from
atheism to Christianity and a good many Christians found that the book helped to bolster their flagging faith.

People in different parts of the world, who were profoundly influenced by this book, started appealing to Therese and seeking her assistance for the purpose of solving their personal problems. Often the sick and the distressed sought her help. Incredibly, there were countless miraculous healings. Wonderful happenings were reported. She relieved the sufferings of a great many people. It is a blessing that her intercessional work continues unabated.

Innumerable are the favours that human beings in every continent have been obtaining through the intervention of Therese. Thousands had first-hand experience of miracles that took place on account of her loving intercessions in Heaven. These privileged souls were, needless to say, grateful that their prayers had been answered.

There is a set of seven volumes published between 1907-1925 entitled Shower of Roses (Pluie de Roses). These interesting books are a record of some of the extraordinary favours obtained through Therese’s intercession. A noteworthy miracle occurred on May 26th 1908 when a four-year-old girl was instantaneously cured of her blindness when she was brought to Therese’s tomb in the Lisieux cemetery. The inhabitants of Lisieux were filled with wonder at the restoration of her sight.

On March 23rd 1923 an estimated 50,000 pilgrims reverently lined the route to Carmel in the expectation of feasting their eyes upon the carriage carrying the precious casket with Therese’s relics. The carriage that was draped in white solemnly went by amidst the pious. Then there were several miraculous happenings. A young blind woman found that she could suddenly see. A soldier who had been paralysed for fifteen months discovered that he could walk just as the carriage was passing him.

Long after her death Therese continues to be our invisible intercessor, thus fulfilling her prophecy, “I shall spend my Heaven doing good upon earth”.

In 1925 Therese was canonized. This once unknown Religious is generally regarded as the most popular and influential Christian saint of recent times. It is indeed a marvel that this simple sister succeeded in climbing up the heights of spirituality during her very short lifespan of twenty-four years.

After 1925 as a natural consequence of her posthumous fame, more than two thousand churches in honour of this saint were built in different parts of the world including Egypt.

In 1997 Pope John Paul II proclaimed Therese a "Doctor of the Church". She is thus part of a very special circle of about thirty saints. Therese is the youngest woman with this title. Therese, along with Joan of Arc, is the second patron saint of France.

The life of Therese demonstrates that God-realisation is within the reach of even the most ordinary human being, so long as all one’s actions are inspired solely by
love for God. In her life one can hear an echo of the *Bhagavad Gita*: “Always be aware of Me, be devoted to Me, let every action of yours be an offering to Me, thus you will unfailingly discover Me; this I promise since you are dear to Me” (18:65). What was the path that Therese faithfully followed? It was no other than unconditional trust in, and absolute love for God.

“Love is repaid by love alone”⁹ was the motto of Therese. This saying is ascribed to St John of the Cross. God’s love for man is incomparably greater than man’s love for God. Can we ever do enough to repay God’s love? Our debt to the Divine is irredeemably immense.

Certain deeds of the Divine might seem to some to be irrational, unjust, unfair or unreasonable. People fail to see that all their so-called misfortunes are part of the divine ordering of their lives and must therefore directly or indirectly contribute to their own spiritual progress. It is important to understand that no action of the Lord is devoid of love. Nothing can equal the Lord’s love for man. Our *sadhana* is to love God with all our hearts. While the Almighty is Love Itself, we can never adequately reciprocate His love for us.

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Iswara said:

Like bubbles arising on the waters of the ocean, gods and men and beasts of the phenomenal world arose, and will arise again and again, on the waters of the mass of solid Bliss (*ghana ananda*) in the Consort of Uma (Siva). There is no worldly misery for those who, through their experience, perceive all this arising out of the waves of delusion clearly as myself.

Because of delusion, people do not realise Hara to be known as the cause of every little thing and as the cause of every being and also as the cause of even greater dissolution. When the presence of the Consort of Uma (Siva) shines in the reflecting pool of the recesses of the space of the heart, like the revered of birds (Garuda), then destruction of the serpent of mundane misery results.

Mrs. Taleyarkhan introduced a group, Miss Sen and some others (a Captain or Major Rao, who was going to marry Miss Sen, and another lady from Indore) as friends of her sister Rita. Then I told Bhagavan that Rita has had a miracle in her life and requested Mrs. Taleyarkhan to tell the story.

She thereupon told Bhagavan the following: "Bhagavan, we got Rita a seat in a medical college and hospital in London for training as a nurse, through the kind offices of Lady Willingdon who was then Vicerine here. The matron of the hospital there, however, disliked my sister from the beginning, because of her colour, and treated her as dirt. My sister patiently bore all this, and always prayed to St. Theresa in whom she had great faith. Her troubles came to a climax in this way. When it was about a month or so away from her examination, she accidentally hurt her eye with the spray of an acid, when she was opening a bottle of the acid in the laboratory. The eye had to be kept bandaged for several days and it was not yet all right even close to the examination. But on the night before the examination, after she had gone to sleep, my sister had a strange experience: She felt she heard a slight footstep and that someone opened the door and was coming gently towards her. She could even hear the rustle and swish of the dress as the visitor approached. The visitor came by the bedside and removed my sister's bandage. My sister opened her eyes and saw her favourite Saint Theresa standing by her with a scroll in her hand. The saint thereupon unrolled the scroll and there my sister saw all the questions that were set for her examination the next day. After my sister had ample time to go through the questions one by one and to remember them, the vision passed away, and my sister got up, woke up her friend in the next room, asked her to find from the books all the answers needed and to read them out to her. The next day my sister also attended the examination, found all the questions the same as revealed to her the previous night, answered them and not only passed her examination contrary to the expectations of her matron, but even won the gold medal for proficiency in that year."

When Mrs. Taleyarkhan concluded the above account, I said, "Miracles have not ceased to happen. They are happening even now to those who pray and have faith."

From Day by Day with Bhagavan, entry for 25-2-46.
PERCY Bysshe Shelley was the eldest son of a Member of Parliament and a Baronet. Educated at Eton and Oxford he enjoyed the privileged classical schooling (Latin and Greek) of the minor aristocracy. He was however deeply rebellious and at Oxford he called himself an ‘atheist’, that is, he rejected the Church’s theistic view of a paternal deity sitting in the clouds. But he always retained his faith in a Supreme Absolute who transcended the conventional religious view. His atheism was adopted more to shock others than state his real viewpoint. He was expelled from Oxford as a consequence.

In 1810 he published his first collection of poetry, privately, under the pseudonym Victor Cazire. This juvenalia exhibited a prodigious talent. The world had been given a natural born poet of fiery genius. His rebellion moved to politics where an intense passion for personal liberty and social justice led him to radicalism. He sat at the feet of the philosopher William Godwin, “the English Rousseaux”.

His first marriage to a childhood sweetheart, Harriet, was a disaster but his second marriage to Godwin’s daughter Mary, was a great and happy literary partnership. Mary Shelley became famous for the first ever science-fiction novel Frankenstein.

He travelled to Ireland to engage in the political struggle but was soon disillusioned by the chicaneries of politicians. He decided that poetry was the best way to influence humanity by touching the hearts and sublimer feelings of men. His youthful philosophy and radicalism combined in his first successful major poem Queen Mab. This epic, later became the Bible of the revolutionary Chartist movement.
When he settled down with Mary and an annuity from his father, his prolific poetic output commenced. *Alastor* a semi-autobiographical portrait of a young poet, hauntingly beautiful, was followed by *The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* a description of his ethical views and the mystical experience that had come to him as an act of Grace.

He became great friends with Keats, Byron, and for a time Wordsworth. These four young songbirds forged a new Romantic Movement in English Poetry, unequalled ever since. He became deeply interested in the mystical philosophy of Plato and translated the *Symposium* into English. In the spring of 1819 he embarked on his masterpiece *Prometheus Unbound*, a Greek tragedy which pointed the way for man's freedom from tyranny. Later there was a further sunburst of creativity which included *The Ode To the West Wind* and the *Odes to Liberty*. His first play *The Cenci* followed, a tragedy set in Renaissance Italy. As a dramatist he ambitiously wished to emulate Shakespeare. As an essayist he wrote his famous *Defence of Poetry* which clearly set out the principles of what he termed 'The Higher Poetry'. When Keats died tragically his elegiac poem was a most moving tribute revealing his attitude to the deathless human spirit on lines similar to the *Gita*.

Admiration of the Italian beauty Emilia Viviani resulted in the great Platonic love poem *The Epipsychidion*. In Italy, a land he loved, he lived with Byron, Mary and his young family. There he commenced *The Triumph of Life*, his last *magnum opus* before the tragic accident when this young poetic genius drowned, sailing in a storm.

Byron and his friends cremated his body on the beach. Alas, the young Apollo who fired England with mystical, romantic and revolutionary fervour was no more. A whole nation mourned the sudden passing of Shelley. It was so soon after the death of John Keats, also at a young age.

The young Robert Browning in a poetic tribute called him 'Sun-treader'. This is a handsome eulogy. He says:

Sun-treader, life and light be thine for ever!
Thou art gone from us; years go by and spring
Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,
But none like thee; they stand, thy majesties,
Like mighty works which tell some spirit there
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
And left us, never to return, and all

But thou art still for me who have adored
Though single, panting but to hear thy name
Sri Aurobindo writes:

Shelley alone of the English poets was very nearly fitted to be a sovereign voice of the new spiritual force that was at the moment attempting to break into poetry and possess there its kingdom. He has on the one hand, one feels, been a native of the heights to which he aspires and the memory of them, not indeed quite distinct, but still environing his imagination with its luminous ethereality, is yet with him. If the idea of a being not of our soil fallen into the material life and still remembering his skies can be admitted as an actual fact of human birth, then Shelley was certainly a living example of one of these luminous spirits half obscured by earth; the very stumblings of his life came from the difficulty of such a nature moving in the alien terrestrial environment in which he is not at home nor capable of accepting its muddy vesture and iron chain, attempting impatiently to realise there the law of his own being in spite of the obstruction of the physical clay. This mind and nature cannot live at ease in their dusk day and time, but escape to dwell prophetically in a future heaven and earth in which the lower life shall have accepted the law of his own celestial worlds. As a poet his intellect is suffused with their light and his imagination is bathed in it; they are steeped in the brilliances of a communion with a higher law, another order of existence, another meaning behind Nature and terrestrial things. But in addition he possesses the intellectual equipment possible in his age and can speak with a subtle beauty and perfect melody the tongue of the poetic intelligence. He is a seer of spiritual realities, much more radiantly near to them than Wordsworth, has, what Coleridge had not, a poetic grasp of metaphysical truths, can see the forms and hear the voices of higher elemental spirits and natural godheads than those seen and heard by Blake, while he has a knowledge too of some fields of the same middle realm, is the singer of a greater and deeper liberty and a purer and nobler revolt than Byron, has the constant feeling of a high spiritual and intellectual beauty, not sensuous in the manner of Keats, but with a hold on the subtler beauty of sensible things which gives us not their glow of vital warmth and close material texture, but their light and life and the rarer atmosphere that envelops them on some meeting line between spirit and body. He is at once seer, poet, thinker, prophet, artist.²

We are reminded that “Bhagavan loved to listen to readings from the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats and so on. He enjoyed them all and brought out their inner significance by a few words of comment at once apt, penetrating and revealing”.³

¹ Pauline
² The Future Poetry, Ch.3.
³ Ramana’s Muruganar, p.16.
On 23rd January 1937 Mrs. Jennings, an American lady read some lines from Shelley and asked Bhagavan if Shelley was not a realised soul.

CANCELLED PASSAGE OF
THE ODE TO LIBERTY

Within a cavern of man's trackless spirit
Is throned an Image, so intensely fair
That the adventurous thoughts that wander near it
Worship, and as they kneel, tremble and wear
The splendour of its presence, and the light
Penetrates their dreamlike frame
Till they become charged with the strength of flame.

The Maharshi replied, “Yes. The lines are excellent. He must have realised what he wrote.” 4

What greater affirmation can we have regarding Shelley's place as a mystical poet?

The following are selections from his prolific outpourings which commenced at the age of sixteen and continued till his death.

His great dramatic masterpiece Prometheus Unbound contains the following beautiful extract. He was a master of rhythm, metre and cadence with a rich sensuous language hitherto unparalleled by the English poets. He wrote about true love:

This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism.
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;

4 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No.341, p.310 (1994 Edn.).
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

Another example of his lyricism comes from *Invitation*. Here the soul is called to awake and merge in the universal sun.

. . . Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains,
And the pools where winter rains
Image all their roof of leaves,
Where the pine its garland weaves
Of sapless green and ivy dun
Round stems that never kiss the sun;
Where the lawns and pastures be
And the sandhills of the sea; —
Where the melting hoar-frost wets
The daisy-star that never sets,
And wind-flowers, and violets,
Which yet join not scent to hue,
Crown the pale year weak and new
When the night is left behind
In the deep east, dun and blind,
And the blue noon is over us,
And the multitudinous
Billows murmur at our feet,
Where the earth and ocean meet,
And all things seem only one
In the universal sun. . .
But it was in *Adonais*, a poetic elegy on the death of Keats, that Shelley demonstrated his mystical nature. Here is a short quotation from this eloquent masterpiece:

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.
The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

Another example is from his poem on 'Death':

O man! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way,
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,
Where hell and heaven shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.
Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death?
Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?
Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?
Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
With the fears and the love for that which we see?

In a recent article S.R. Swaminathan in discussing Shelley's last unfinished poem *The Triumph of Life* writes:

Undoubtedly Platonism is an important element in Shelley's philosophy especially of love and beauty as his Western critics have often pointed out, and between *Vedanta* and Platonism there is a good deal of common ground. However, in his commitment to absolute spiritual non-dualism, in his rejection of the idea of personal immortality in favour of the final absorption of the *atman* in *Brahmanirvana*, his view of the phenomenal world as *maya* or illusion, his emphasis on the need to renounce all sensual craving, his belief in *karma*, reincarnation and transmigration through the cycles of birth and death in the soul's quest of *moksha*, and in *avatars*, Shelley is much closer to Sankaracharya's *advaita* and Hindu symbolism than to Platonic doctrine. Surely no poet is made by reading, and though he was familiar with the large outline of Hindu cosmogony, these ideas are rooted in his own intuition of *Vedantic* beauty and truth, and run through his major work like the woof of a web giving it its universal poetic coherence. They attain their most condensed and suggestive summing up in the fragmentary 'Triumph' written at the end of his life.

We may close with a complete poem, the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* — which describes Shelley's boyhood transcendental experience. This was composed in the summer of 1816 during his stay with Byron on the shores of Lake Geneva. In verse V he refers to his boyhood and in verse VI he vows to dedicate his soul to Beauty whom he sees as the deathless divine spirit of love. This is close to John Keats — 'Truth is Beauty'. In verse I he tells of this awful shadow of some unseen power which floats unseen amongst us if only we are open to it.

**HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY**

I

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us, — visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower, —

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5 *Keats-Shelley Review.*
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
   It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening, —
Like clouds in starlight widely spread, —
Like memory of music fled, —
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

II
Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
   With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, — where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom, — why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

III
No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
   To sage or poet these responses given —
Therefore the names of God and ghosts and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
Frail spells — whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
   From all we hear and all we see,
   Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone — like mist o'er mountains driven,
   Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
   Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.
Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent.
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes —
Thou — that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came,
Depart not — lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed:
I was not heard — I saw them not —
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming, —
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine — have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night —
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That Thou — O awful loveliness,
Wouldst give what'er these words cannot express.

VII
The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past — there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm — to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

Perhaps the last word of this tribute should be by Shelley himself. In his influential essay *On the Defence of Poetry* he writes:

A poet, as he is the author to others of the highest wisdom, pleasure, virtue and glory, so he ought personally to be the happiest, the best, the wisest, and the most illustrious of men. As to his glory let Time be challenged to declare whether the fame of any other institution of human life be comparable to that of a poet. That he is the wisest, the happiest, and the best, inasmuch as he is a poet, is equally incontrovertible: the greatest poets have been men of the most spotless virtue, of the most consummate prudence, and, if we could look into the interior of their lives, the most fortunate of men.

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**THE NAME OF RAMA**

Once a man was about to cross the sea. Vibhishana wrote Rama's name on a leaf, tied it in a corner of the man's wearing-cloth, and said to him: 'Don't be afraid. Have faith and walk on the water. But look here: the moment you lose faith you will be drowned.' The man was walking easily on the water. Suddenly he had an intense desire to see what was tied in his cloth. He opened it and found only a leaf with Rama's name written on it. 'What is this?' he said himself. 'Just the name of Rama.' As soon as a doubt entered his mind he sank under the water.

— Sri Ramakrishna.
Some rightly say that Sat is that
even aware
existence which is ever aware
But sadly add, that the world-body pair
is not just hidden from awareness but—
in deep dreamless sleep.
“For”, they say, “In dreamless sleep
the world and body are,
unseen, unheard, untouched, unfelt
and this
is just because the two do not exist”.

THE FALLACY .........
From this it’s but a step to say
“where the world-body pair does not exist
the pristine Self shines fully bared
unhindered by body, or worldly care,
especially in deep dreamless sleep”.

And so
They say, “the show goes on and what are we
but momentary waves upon the sea
of transience and yet between them all
remain as water ’twixt the rise and fall
of waking life and dream delusion”—

This
Logic, lame and flawed, I do insist
there’s something here that’s wrong—
of this be sure
For, if true— the Self was all, in sleep;
no world, no body, nor ego’s trace impure.
If ’I’ remained as Self, as jnana ‘heaped’—
then why don’t I at Self, on waking, keep?

THE TRUTH .........
The I’m-this-body error is the snake
that’s seen in waking
and the dreams we make.
It continues in sleep. I hope it’s clear
the rope I saw in light as “this snake here”
persists as snake for me although unseen—
when lights go dim
I’d rather not step out—
I surely can’t assume that snake
isn’t anywhere about.
The snake though false was seen by me in light;
the darkness thus is powerless
to end my error’s might
The fact is that the tendency to see
the rope as snake remains at night in me!
So also
He who says in waking: “I’m this body-ness”,
will be this flaw well fed in sleepy rest.
This ‘causal body’ rules in sleep for him
whose body-sense in waking is no whim.
The fool who claimed: “the body uncognised
in sleep it’s just not there. A total jest!”
Must now concede:
“(like the snake that lay in the dark unespied),
in sleep the body quite exists unmanifest”.

In world-of-form and sleep the sage doth hold
the Self persists— with body or without
A smith he sees no ornament but gold
For, work-of-art, or lump—
it’s gold no doubt?
We intuit the water only when
while amidst the waves
we choose to gaze upon
the waveless void
‘between’ the waves, and then—
It’s water, water every spot
It’s water, wave or not.

So too
The Self is intuited only when
while amidst this cosmic Thought—
this waking world that the Self unfurled
we choose to gaze upon—
The ‘causal’ void, the ‘I-am-ness’ between
our thoughts, and then—
Like the ripening of a fruit
we do by Grace intuit
The Self ‘appears’; the ‘I’ unborn.
The Self—dusk or dawn.

SRI BHAGAVAN’S REFERENCE TO KALIDASA

Sri N. Balarama Reddy narrated the following interesting anecdote:

“Nayana (Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni) was discussing with Bhagavan Kalidasa’s greatness. During the talk Bhagavan happened to mention that the Ingudi tree referred to in Kalidasa’s Sakuntalam was found in our forest, near the Ashram.

“One afternoon, Bhagavan went with Nayana to the forest to show him the Ingudi tree. Later on Muruganar, not finding Bhagavan in the Hall and thinking that Bhagavan might have gone to Palakotthu, went there. Learning that Bhagavan and Nayana had gone into the forest, Muruganar went in search of them. Afterwards, Viswanatha Swami got word that the three had proceeded to the forest, and he too followed. He located them in the forest. Then, Bhagavan who had already pointed out the tree to Nayana and Muruganar, showed it to Viswanatha Swami also. All the three scholars wondered how Bhagavan who had never read kavyas and knew no botany could identify such a rare tree as Ingudi (Terminalia Catappa). Then, they realised that nothing was unknown to a sarvajna (all-knowing one)!”

— Moments Remembered.
Bhagavan Ramana and His Ashram

By Ramamani

SRI Ramanasramam today is not a mere relic of the past but a dynamic centre radiating the vibrant presence of Sri Bhagavan. The Brahma Nirvana in 1950 is an event in time and apparently a dividing line between Sri Bhagavan’s days and after, but otherwise this has made no difference to the spiritual ministry of Sri Bhagavan. Buildings and material comforts have been added since Sri Bhagavan’s days but all this has been done without weakening, in any sense or degree, the power of his presence, as many old devotees are only too ready to testify.

What do we look for in any Ashram? To be truthful most of us do look forward to some basic comforts or amenities. From this angle, the Ashram has done well. Some thirty years ago, there was only a group of thatched buildings and the barest necessities. Few realize how much has changed, since the change has been so slow and smooth. And though some may wonder whether we need all these “amenities” in the Ashram, the majority of sadhakas find them helpful and do welcome them.

The electricity and the water supply are mere conveniences, an adjustment to changing times and this has come about naturally almost unnoticed. On the other hand, some visitors accustomed to more luxurious fare find fault with the meagre food and comforts here provided. Ours is, as it has ever been, a common home with a common kitchen for ordinary people, for plain wholesome living, with no ostentation of want and certainly none of wealth. Though the management is no doubt devoted, thoughtful and diligent, surely it is the Higher Will that has been the prime mover behind the silent necessary growth. The machinery goes on smoothly because the hub of it is sound and safe in the hands of persons vitally because naturally, devoted and interested in the Person who embodied the utterly Impersonal.

‘Venkataraman’ (the original name of Sri Bhagavan) was dead, in Sri Bhagavan’s own words, even at Madurai, when he was merged in the Self at the age of 16. For him the spiritual journey was complete then and there!

Arunachala now calls him and he obeys the call. The temple doors are wide open, with no one between him and his Father.

From Venkato '60 (Souvenir).  
1 This was written in 1974
He moves on to the Hill. Followers gather and grow in strength. His mother comes too and stays with him. The Ashram does its own cooking now, thanks to the mother. On her, by right of nature, he concentrates his grace in her last moments and confers final freedom. The body is interred at the foot of the Hill on the southern slopes. He visits and revisits the spot and then, one day stays and settles there for good. The present Ashram — Sri Ramanasramam — comes into being to continue thereafter as his abode, where, in his presence, prince and pauper, peasant and pundit, all are treated alike and all feel equally at home.

What is meant by the jnani carrying on with the body even after jnana? We have this explained to us by Sri Bhagavan himself:

There are various controversies or schools of thought as to whether a jnani can continue to live in his physical body after realisation. Some hold that one who dies cannot be a jnani because his body must vanish into air or some such thing. They put forward all sorts of funny notions. If a man must at once leave his body when he realises the Self, I wonder how any knowledge of the Self or the state of realisation can come down to other men. And that would mean that all those who have given us the fruits of their Self-realisation in books cannot be considered ajnani because they went on living after realisation. And if it is held that a man cannot be considered a jnani so long as he performs actions in the world (and action is impossible without the mind), then not only the great sages who carried on various kinds of work after attaining jnana but the gods also and Ishwara Himself must be considered ajnani, since He continues looking after the world. The fact is that any amount of action can be performed, and performed quite well by the jnani, without his identifying himself with it in any way, or ever imagining that he is the doer. Some power acts through his body and uses his body to get the work done.

Only in the light of this explanation can we understand the maintenance of the Ashram as a spiritual centre or its material growth. Hundreds of instances in his lifetime could be cited as evidence of Sri Bhagavan's supreme compassion and concern for his devotees. His greatness was in no way affected or questioned because he came forth with guidance and help, sometimes even in very ordinary matters. And so it cannot be imagined that Sri Bhagavan, so full of compassion and concern, could have been indifferent to the needs of the future. It is to Sri Bhagavan that we owe the present set-up and outer structure of the Ashram.

And so Sri Bhagavan's grace will envelop the whole world. But, historically and geographically, the Presence in its fullness, the centre of radiance, will always be His chosen Home, the Ashram, standing and growing here beside the Mother's shrine and the Rock of Transcendent Awareness!

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2 Day by Day with Bhagavan, pp.238-39.
BOOK REVIEWS


Omori Sogen (1904-1994) was one of the foremost Rinzai Zen teachers of this century. His Zen teaching is remarkable for the breadth demanded of his students. He wanted Zen to retain both the martial vigour of the great Zen teachers of the samurai era and the refinement found in the best Zen calligraphers. The author says that he came to write this book because he found that most of the available books on Zen practice of zazen were not written by competent practitioners, and also because the two books Zazen no Shokei (Rinzai) and Zazen no Hiketsu (Soto), which he considers to be masterpieces of practical value belong to earlier eras and are rare to obtain.

His life spanning the transition from the 1900s, when teachers schooled in the samurai tradition were still alive, to the 1990s when Japan began to take on a larger role in the world, Omori was able to draw on the vigorous traditions that flourished then and bring alive many of the traditional stories.

The text provides a solid introduction to the physical nature of training—discussing breath, pain, posture, drowsiness, state of mind and physiology—as well as the context in which Zen training takes on meaning. Although seemingly so, zazen is not just ‘quiet sitting’. And it is valuable to see it so thoroughly approached as it is here. The book ends with commentaries on two Zen texts that help to place all of the instruction in context. Omori Sogen takes Hakuin’s Zazen Wasan and makes it meaningful to modern times. He finishes by using the traditional Ten Ox-Herding Pictures to show the rigour and physicality of Zen training.

Those used to the No-self doctrine of Buddhism, must learn to look beyond concept, at the True Self referred to liberally in this well known Zen training manual:

“The True Self is the ultimate subject. The basis of all our illusions is the act of regarding the objectifications of our own minds, as a world independent of that mind which is really its source and substance.”

— J. Jayarâman


This book is a revised edition of the doctoral thesis presented by the author (a retired Professor and HOD of Medicine, Tamilnadu Medical Educational Service) to the City University at Los Angeles and approved by them in 1994. The thesis itself arose from a condensation of notes that the author had prepared over the years as part of his spiritual sådhana. The author, obviously influenced deeply by the Maharshi, devotes a greater half of his book to Bhagavan’s works, his teaching and most importantly, the practise of Âtma Vichâra. The author has also benefitted from JK, Gurdjieff and Nisargadatta Maharaj, and there is a short section on the latter two.

The author’s coverage, in the first half of the book, of the various important Upanishads, Âdi Sankara’s Bhâshyas and other works and a critique of his non-advaitic contemporaries including some Buddhist schools, and his treatment of the post-Sankara Vivarana (jiva-is-like-a-reflected-image) and Avaccheda (jiva-is-like-the-conditioned-pot-space) schools, are mercifully brief but comprehensive. He touches effectively upon the seven Jnâna and seven Ajnâna bhûmikas, the six khyâlis, the six (ie., twin inner-and-outter trio of) samâdhis etc. His treatment of how Prârabdha and Âgami Karmas feedback to Sanchita is excellent. His definition of Aniccha (among the three types of) Prârabdha is lacking. It is properly defined by the example of the hangman having to do his unpleasant task owing to the king’s just order. It is obvious that the author has made a study of all important post-Sankara works (including compendia like Vichârasâgaram and Kaivalya Navaîlam) dealing with the above Vedântic terms often referred to in Talks by Bhagavan.
The author has a clarity that does not lose sight of fundamentals while taking on varying philosophical approaches. The author leans comfortably on the most reliable of prakriyas: the dream simile. The author pushes for ēkajīva vāda forcefully, and cautions that it should not be confused with solipsism (the Vijnanāvādīn/ Berkelian view that the waking-subject creates the waking-world).

Among the three drṣṭis (attitudes; bhāvās) recommended for gaining the ēkajīva bhāva the author refers to pādha drṣṭi (attitude of rejection) wrongly as bhēda drṣṭi, mistranslating it as “elimination of difference” (p.149).

The section on Bhagavān is remarkable. The author seems to have made a full study of all the Ashram publications, even The Mountain Path issues. His resume of Bhagavān’s important works: Aksharamanamālai; Ėkāṭmā Panchakam; Forty Verses and Upadhīśasāram are commendable. Muruganār’s Guru Vāchakakkovai and Ganapati Muni’s Ramana Gītā are also covered. The author labels the Muni as a sākta (on the basis of some of the questions he put to Maharshi) instead of seeing in the elucidations thus obtained, an important source for the essentials of the Kundalini/Prāna system (and its place in the traditional hierarchy of Ātma-vidyā), as expounded by Bhagavān Ramana.

Though the section on Ramana seems to be largely composed of passages taken off extant texts, the way the matter has been ordered, along with very pertinent clarifications embedded by the author un-obtrusively in the flow, is proof of a serious study usefully digested through dhyāna and vichāra. An example — “In Self-enquiry, the sense of questioning (prajnā), and the cessation of thoughts (samādhi), are both required for manonāsa, because samādhi without prajnā is sleep or laya, and prajnā without samādhi leads to mistaken views and blabbering” (p.236) a phenomenon increasingly seen in modern ‘gurus’. The author’s list of six obstacles to spiritual progress cannot be bettered (p.275).

The chapters 13 to 15 treat of the practise of Ātma Vichāra and contain very useful pointers—and some blemishes. The author says (p.311) that Bhagavān’s Forty Verses are his direct teachings whereas His Supplement is only ‘one of diluted truths from the Sāstras’. Again, the author says (pp.300, 317, 325) that the body does not exist in deep sleep, and that pure Consciousness shines then as the real Ī, and that the thought ‘I (-am the body)’ does not exist in deep sleep just as it does not exist in the state of Jñana. If so, indeed Self is realized foremost in deep sleep and one wonders why one does not continue so from then on! The following simile (and a poem elsewhere in this M.P. issue) should clarify the reviewer’s point. Consider a snake wrongly seen in place of the rope. An erroneous thought exists as “A snake is seen here” while the snake is seen in twilight; and it exists as “the snake is not seen here” when night falls. It is foolish to argue: ‘since the snake is not seen, the snake does not exist during nightfall’. For, regardless of whether the snake ‘exists’ or not in the darkness, the original error exists submerged. This should explain why the Self, if veiled by error during waking must continue veiled in sleep. The deluded man who saw the snake in twilight, is doubly deluded should he conclude that the snake, being unseen, does not exist in the dark. A wiser colleague however, standing by his side in the darkness (and who was free from the ‘snake-error’ even in twilight), would alone have the right to say: “there is no snake here in the darkness”. For, he would hold the same view even in twilight! Ātma Vichāra can never begin in sleep. He who has resolved during waking, that the body, along with the world seen through it, is a mere mirage, is alone entitled to declare that the world does not exist at all in sleep. The ego experiencing itself as an embodied unit and declaring upon ‘waking’ that the world was non-existent during its ‘sleep’, is only aggravating its waking-delusions.

Given the wholistic vision in this book towards Vādāntic tradition vis à vis Ātma Vichāra, the author’s branding above of Ganapati Muni as a sākta, the Forty Verses Supplement as a sastric dilution, and sūshupti as entirely bodiless and more revealing of the Self than waking or dream, was intriguing. But only till I discovered that he has drawn the material for all that unquestioningly from Sīrī Sādhu Om’s Path of Sīrī Ramana and, Noonmalai. The two works unquestionably provide scope for much insight along the way, but are not free from prejudice
and its progeny— error! The Ajatavâdî (the one of ‘unborn speech’; the Jnâni) is only bemused at hyper-advaîtin, authors (and reviewers) ‘defending’ ājâta-vâda against (non-existent, but nevertheless) deluded sâktâns and dvaitâns!

It is the reviewer’s earnest hope that the author would sift and make amends in the next edition. The Glossary and Index could be expanded to cover all the technical terms and themes used in this book.

Worthy books like this presenting Advaitic tradition along with Bhagavan’s teaching are rare— one recalls T.M.P. Mahâdévâ’s Ramâna Maharshi, and Lakshmana Sarma’s Maха Yôga— classics in this genre.

— J. Jayarâman


Publisher’s Note states that chanting of Rudram etc. with full knowledge of their meaning will give immense mental and spiritual joy to the aspirants. But here lies the big catch. Vedic mantras are not easy to interpret. Sri Aurobindo outlines in The Secret of Veda the difficulties in unravelling the meanings of the Vêdic mantras. The following lines taken from his book will convey the formidable nature of the task:

"The ritual system recognised by Sâyana may, in its externality stand; the naturalistic sense discovered by European scholarship may in its general conceptions be accepted; but behind them there is always the true and whole hidden secret of the Vêda— the secret words, nînŷâ vacâmsi, which were spoken for the purified in Soul and the awakened in knowledge. To disengage this less obvious but more important sense by fixing the import of Vêdic terms, the sense of Vêdic Symbols and the psychological functions of the Gods is thus a difficult but necessary task."

The literal meaning of some of the mantras may not appeal to the modern mind. For example, in the third anuvâka of Śrî Rudram, worship is offered to Lord Siva appearing in the form of protector of different categories of robbers etc. The idea that God is an indwelling presence in all forms of life is easily appreciated; but to say that Lord Siva appears in the form of robbers may seem baffling. Therefore, commentators like Vishnusûri, Bhatta Bhâskara, Abhinava Sankara differed from Sâyana and attempted to give a spiritual meaning to the mantras.

The author has taken great pains to explain the meanings of the mantras not only according to Sâyana but also from the standpoint of these other commentators. The mantras are printed in Dêvanâgari script with accentuation marks. A free rendering of the meaning is given followed by a discussion which is divided into two portions— one, based on the Karma and Upâsana view-point and the other, based on the esoteric explanation of Vishnusûri. Purusha Sûktam is explained with the help of the commentaries of Sâyana and Bhatta Bhâskara.

The printing and get-up are quite good. Devotees will find the publication quite useful.

— V.R.K. Râman


What exactly is the Sanâtana Dharma, the Eternal Religion, exalted by Hindus as being the wisest norm? What is meant by the Hindu way of life? Ask this of any of today’s youngsters who walk so casually in the creed of their birth and they would probably confess only to a superficial knowledge of the daily rituals and of the customary festive and social realities that impinge on their life. There is no time to go deeper into philosophic and spiritual questions, or into the implications of the diverse ways of reaching the goal of liberation, which Hinduism, not only assures is possible but maintains is the goal of human life. However such questions have been found to be increasingly relevant not only to Indian children but more so as Swâmi Bhâskarananda found while living in America, to children of Hindu immigrants there. There also seemed to be a nascent interest in academic circles in America in the subject.

Invited to speak on Hinduism in schools, colleges and universities in America, the Swâmi a monk of the Râmakrishna Mission found himself called upon to explain to Christian and Jewish
audiences the basic tenets of one of the world’s oldest religions. For, even today while the rational Western mind claims to understand Islam and Buddhism, there appears to be a cultural block when it comes to aspects of Hinduism’s metaphysics and philosophies which appear confusing and abstruse. To meet these wide ranging demands Swamiji was perforce inspired to tell the essentials as well as to simplify the most complex issues and to present the encapsulated wisdom of Hinduism in this admirable handbook.

Though compact, being essentially a reader, it covers a comprehensive range of topics starting with the Indo Aryans, the structure of their society, their way of life, details of their marriage and funeral and family customs. Even ticklish questions such as whether the Vedic ancestors ate meat and why the Hindus of today largely do not do so are explained in honest terms. Also the more difficult aspects of philosophy and metaphysics of the doctrines of Karma, predestination and of reincarnation have been tackled very intelligently without using any cliches and in so lucid and direct a manner as to leave no room for ambiguities. Even complex theories concerning the creation and dissolution of the world according to the Sāṅkhya and Vēdāntic schools which appear contradictory have been unravelled in rational terms. One of the devices used by the Swāmī to make complex things appear simple and lucid are expressive analogies and the delightful stories he relates in relevant contexts.

Amidst all this praise one must bemoan some oversimplifications such as the amazing statement that the highly revered Rishis or gōtrapats from whom all Hindus trace their descent were supervisors appointed to settle disputes over the ownership of cattle kept in common shelters called gōtras. Neither does it ring true that Rishis were celibate and hence had phenomenal memory to preserve the Vēdas. The Rishis, as we learn of them, were mostly householders and it was the very strong oral tradition of these times which preserved the Vēdas and other religious scriptures. However these are minor points which do not detract from the presentation of the whole complex picture. Swāmī Bhāskarānanda’s lucid and expressive style makes this book one of universal appeal to young and old in India as in the West. Trust the Rāmakrishna Math to bring out a book of quality, a sure winner.

— Prēma Rāo


Rev. Jacques Dupuis’ book is divided into two parts, covering some 110 and 135 pages, respectively. The first part with four chapters deals mainly with doctrinal and theological issues while the second with seven chapters discusses the scope and significance of the advent of Jesus Christ in Christianity, the gospel, related holy scriptures and the evangelical mission of the church in the overall scenario of world religions.

The term Hindu, frequently mentioned in the book, is actually a misnomer coined by western scholars and writers for the adherents of what is properly understood as Sanātana Dharma, a phrase that is difficult to translate into English but may be taken broadly as an eternal code of righteous conduct. Even atheists and agnostics have their place among Hindus without detriment to this nomenclature or description. Principles of Sanātana Dharma were existent, well-known and practised by large sections of the world’s populace even before any historical or mythological character or divine manifestation in human form appeared on earth to save mankind from perdition. In fact, it is assured in the Bhagavad Gīta that whenever there is a decline in righteousness God manifests on earth to restore Dharma. This may happen in different contexts, forms and places. The author arrogates the virtues and wisdom of Sanātana Dharma to his faith and regards their expression in others as a gift to humanity from what he naively calls ‘anonymous Christianity’. Why any religion should remain anonymous, as if lacking in moral force and spiritual strength to expose and spread itself in the wide open world, is anybody’s guess. To the author’s blinkered vision even Lord Śrī Krāhma and the divine messages He pronounced in the universally acclaimed Bhagavad Gīta appear to
be only copies and products of an imaginary, antecedent and anonymous Christianity.

Unfortunately for mankind many bigoted and misguided preachers of one religious persuasion or another are often overpowered by a tempting and baseless notion that their approach is the only one chosen to grant salvation to man in a grand, mysterious and undisclosed divine plan and that their own God or guru the only mediator! Such misconception is the root cause of inter-religious strife the world over. Religious discord or plurality cannot be countered by propagandist literature in which dialogue has only one meaning—'we shall discuss and debate the matter at any length but you must finally accept my unquestionable conclusion that my faith alone has divine sanction'. An example of pseudo-openness in spiritual quest:

After acquainting the reader with quotations from Sw. Abhishiktananda (Fr. Henri Le Saux) about his spiritual evolution where Ramana Arunachala played a keyrole, the author mentions that the *advaitic* proposition *aham brahmāsmi* "finds its truest application in (the historical) Jesus and in him acquires a new sense. It enunciates Jesus' oneness with his Father which has its foundation beyond the human condition (and) it expresses Jesus' personal awareness of belonging, with his Father, to the sphere of divinity. ... This human consciousness in Jesus of his personal communion with the Father in the *advaita* of divinity would then be the crown and fulfilment of the intuition of the Upanishadic seers, and at the same time resolve the antimony that the *advaita* experience seems to leave unsumounted between the values of absolute unity and personal communion*. The author goes on to assert: "the *advaita* experience would not have furnished Jesus (even if he had lived and revealed his mystery in a land of Hindu culture) with an adequate expression of his own experience." (p.84)

This is a seemingly objective but sadly subliminal and subtly parochial book that should be read with caution and discrimination by non-Christians. Alas the Hindu today is as ignorant (worse, apologetic!) about the scientific rigour in the Upanishads and the universality of approach enshrined in Hinduism, as he is lacking in horsesense about being amidst Trojans.

—Dr. T. Sankaran


The author of this book has done an invaluable service in opening up the implications of the pioneering life of Abhishiktananda in India. It is only possible to draw out one or two threads of his extensive research. With detailed references, bibliography, the reader has only to take the plunge for him/herself. Some will be already familiar with Abhishiktananda's writings, in particular *The Secret of Arunachala* and *Guru and Disciple* where one is literally catapulted into the powerful influence of two great gurus, Ramana Maharshi and Gnânânanda, who drew him more and more deeply along the *advaita* way of the *sannyâsâ* until he finally embraced the state itself.

It is true to say that for him Arunâchala was the birth place of his Hindu-Christian *sannyâsa*, as the writer says. Ever since his first visit in 1949, he was under the spell of this holy mountain. He considers it as a place chosen by God, where His grace is poured out with greater abundance. It was here he began to immerse himself in solitude and freedom and learnt the importance of a wandering life in his monasticism. He sees himself as a bridge builder and it is quite remarkable how he straddles the divide, embracing this calling while still remaing a Benedictine monk, in an age of rigid exclusivism where even the most enlightened enquirer was mentally assessing the Hindu through the bias of the Christian lurking beneath. He was indeed a precursor of the spiritual synthesis which world religions are challenged to create in our pluralistic society of today. He quickly realizes that the analytical mind of the West is totally unable to fathom the subtle inwardness of that of the East. To quote the author: "The Occident departs in general from a zero point of knowledge and advances progressively to the truth, to a knowledge which is exterior. The Orient starts from the contemplated intuitive truth. This truth is not regarded as something purely speculative and theoretical, but as That which is coincident with his being". And Abhishiktananda's works are to be seen in this perspective—as a spontaneous expression
of his profound inner experience in a symbolic and autobiographical language.

The writer captures the ineffable quality of this almost maverick figure moving from one perception to another, as things become less of a dialogue than of a witness of life lived out experientially. The Swámi's pen seems dipped in his own heart's blood, as he pours himself out in his journals, letters to friends and his theological findings. His biographer says he was a compulsive writer and I would add, a born communicator of rare perception groping at the edge where words fail.

Abhishiktánanda hits hardest at the culture from which he was nurtured: the crisis of loss of meaning and lack of direction and emptiness of lives that have lost a sense of the Sacred. The author rightly discerns there is a new generation that is silently rejecting the role of religion and, the church's growing irrelevance in social life and in the experience of God. No doubt this is exacerbated by the development of modern science and the emergence of a new vision of a world independent of any control from a Beyond.

In walking away from a traditional stance, even from a radical Ashram he co-founded, he almost loses his own foothold. He realizes that all institutions, the church included are merely provisional; the historical Jesus no longer speaks to him. As he plunges further into the silence Abhishiktánanda rediscovers him as Guru, the Jesus of the beyond—"I come from the Father and return to the Father", the cycle of Being, birth and rebirth into the unmanifested, from the outward to the inward, and returning of the Word to the Source. In the Upanishads he finds the ontological surge of Being at the depth of the atman of man. He affirms that deep experience can only be in the heart, never at an intellectual level. When the spirit makes contemplative Hindus and Christians meet each other, their hearts penetrate into each other, they understand each other and find that each one is already present in the heart of the other. Something more than personal exchange takes place at the innermost core of being, of ultimate truth— for the Indians it is advaita, for the Christians it is the mystery of the Trinity unveiled in the mystery of the Incarnation.

He wrote in his Journal (p.100):

Arunáchala
Jiva, the beneficial and the compassionate
Śánta, the peaceful
Advaita, the One without second
Púma, the fullness
Ānanda, bliss.

This book is accessible to both layperson and scholar, but beware! If you approach it in a purely cerebral manner you will fail to reach the deeply mysterious and even mystic secret that lies at the heart of Indian spirituality; the freedom and childlike joy, ultimately attained, that indeed Jesus declared was the hallmark of the Kingdom.

—Bridget Mary CSMV


This is a truly remarkable book. The author is described in the blurb as a mathematician, a computer scientist and a linguist. He worked in USA for over 20 years and since 1984 has been an advisor to the NASA, USA. With this scientific background, the author brings a largely emotional attitude of mind to the question of Hinduism, vis-à-vis the other major religions.

He deals with the major features of Hinduism in the first essay: Hinduism is not a revealed religion, it has no single authority or book; Hinduism recognises no prophet as having exclusive claim over spiritual truth; the Hindu god is a personal god, internal to the seeker; Hinduism does not recognise claims of exclusivity or a clergy; Hinduism does not force itself on others through proselytisation. Hindus are not called upon to believe in one prophet and follow one book, as is the case with the Semitic religions.

The author's account of the Dead Sea Scrolls is sensational and calls into question the most fundamental aspects of the Christian religion. The historicity of Jesus' birth and ministry is questioned—put simply, the scrolls deny that there ever was a person called Jesus Christ. However even if Christ did not exist, many of the stories relating to Him as narrated in the New Testament are beautiful and a study of them, ennobling. Christ's parables must be regarded
as a part of the priceless heritage of all humanity.

In this well-documented book, the author refers to the work of Dr. Natwar Jha which proves that the Harappan script has "deep connections" with Vedic literature. He criticises the continued domination of the Aryan invasion theory in the history books in this country. He maintains that the Aryans are native to India and that there was no invasion. Recent excavations, based on satellite pictures, along the desertified bed of the legendary Saraswati river (so central to the Rg Vedic Aryan) appear to lend weight to the non-invasion theory; they also help to push back the age of the Vedas by at least a millennium or two.

The author provides a powerful, even aggressive rebuttal of the theories developed by Dravidian scholars of Western origin like Caldwell and Kamil Zvelebil. While they might have accepted the prevailing theory of Aryan invasion, it cannot be denied that they served the cause of Tamil exceedingly well. Here they are cast as the villains of the piece which seems unfair to them.

In Chapter 13 of the work, the author deals with caste and the Hindu social structure. As is his wont, he blames the Muslims for all the degradation suffered by the Hindus during the middle ages. It is a sad fact that the Muslim conquerors destroyed everything before them (and not merely the military targets); "it is the bloodiest story in history" as Will Durant puts it. Still it is felt that it is wrong and unfair to put all of the blame for the degeneration in the Hindu society after the 10th Century AD, on the Muslim conquerors. The Hindus had had their golden age and were losing much of the creative power and dedication and the spirit of solidarity that had taken them to the top, when the Muslims, urged by the burst of enthusiasm generated by their new religion came on the scene. The Huns could not conquer India in the 4th century A.D. but the Muslim could in the 10th century A.D. The rigidity of the caste system and the stultifying hold of endless rituals had weakened the inner core of Hindu society and the invaders could trample over it with ease.

The work is scholarly and well documented; it holds a number of valuable lessons for the Hindus of today to imbibe. But the fanatical attitude taken by the author strikes the reader as a definitely adverse factor that goes to reduce the value of this otherwise well-written book.

— A.V. Subramanian


Apart from the Introduction, this book contains five lengthy chapters dealing with the concepts of Atman, Brahman, World, Advaita and, Advaita and Language. The book is not a textbook on Advaita that discusses the thought of various Acaryas, rather it is the author's own analysis of the meaning of Advaita. In making this personal contribution, the author has not referred to any of the very extensive secondary literature on the subject. This is surprising, considering the book has been written by a university professor. The author draws exclusively on the commentarial works of Sankara, but at least here he shows a detailed reading of this literature.

In the first chapter, the author tries to ascertain the meaning of the word Atman by tracing its usage in the earlier portions of the Veda and in the latter portion of the Veda, i.e. the Upanishads. The author argues that in the Veda the word Atman primarily means the "essence" or the "inner-reality" of a thing, whether that thing is animate or inanimate, eg. "the Atman of Indra", "the Atman of herbs" etc. The word Atman does not primarily denote the "self" in a psychological sense as a personal self. This meaning continues in the Upanishads, though in the later texts we find that the word is explicitly used in the sense of the ultimate reality, or the essence of all that is. While discussing the meaning of the word Atman the author presents his central contention that once we admit that there is the fundamental distinction of subject and object, it follows that whatever is objectified cannot belong to the subject which must necessarily be free from all objectivity. That to which everything is an object is the absolute Self, which is pure consciousness, but about which nothing can be predicated because all language relates only to objects. The author says:

"Ordinarily, the soul or self is identified with the totality of the functions of mind and senses, and is seen as manifesting itself through those functions, or is conceived as a substance
manifesting itself in and through those functions. This conception of self involves consciousness but is not identified with consciousness. . . . Atman is not the self understood in this sense, but is the knower or witness of the self, or to which the self is an object of knowledge. The author rightly states that the psychological self, the ego, is also a type of object, and that to which it is an object is the self-revealing Atman, the pure consciousness.

The author goes on to discuss what is meant in the Veda and the Upanisads by the word Brahman and he shows that in the Upanishads the words Brahman and Atman are synonymous terms. He then proceeds to discuss the nature of the world in Advaita and what Advaita itself means. In these chapters he raises many points of interest, such as his discussion of matter and consciousness, and the continuity of consciousness in deep sleep. This is a book which can be read with some profit, provided the reader takes the time to follow the discussion. The style in which the book is written gives the impression that the author has written it within a relatively short span of time; if so it would be quite an achievement, though occasionally one would have liked him to develop an argument more fully. The prose is vigorous, with minimal use of commas. Sometimes the reader needs to supply punctuation.

Ultimately, however, the book leaves one unfulfilled. For the author concludes that since the Self is not an object, and all language refers only to objects, nothing can be said about the Self. The only recourse, therefore, is silence. But this is an unsatisfactory conclusion, because although silence may be eloquent to those sufficiently developed persons who can grasp its implication, to others silence is dumb. If the only way to communicate the truth was through silence there would have been no Upanishads, for the Upanishads are just in the form of words, nor would Sankara have written his commentaries. The Upanishads use language to reveal the Real, and even though they themselves recognise the inadequacy of language in the same way as the author has done, they nonetheless use language, refined by the context in which it is used, to reveal the truth, to directly point to it, with the possibility that the hearer may directly grasp the implied meaning of the words if he or she is sufficiently ready. Otherwise there would be no way for the Veda to communicate the nature of reality. But the author has not dealt with these matters, pertaining to spiritual illumination.

— Dr Michael Comans

BOOKS RECEIVED

GURUDEVI SRI JANAKY MATHA: an enlightened disciple of Bh.Ramana: by Dr.G.Swaminathan. (revised edn.) Pub: Sri Janaky Matha Ashram, Thanjavur 613001
PURNA: Pub/Ed. by K.N.Subramaniam, Shankarnagar, Tapovanam 605756. [A sadhana-oriented journal bringing to seekers, the original teachings of great Hindu sages through authentic extracts from scriptures, translated and explained]. Rs120 p.a., Rs.5000 Life
GLIMPSES FROM OUR GLORIOUS PAST: Sw.Sakhyananda. pp84, Rs.15. HISTORIC DATES: V.G.Ramachandran. pp196, Rs.30
RGVEDIC STUDIES: M.Sundarraj. pp602, Rs200. All three pub.by International Soc. For the Investigation of Ancient Civilization, 101 Mount Road, Guindy, Chennai 600032
VANDE MATARAM: Sadhu V. Rangarajan. Pub:Nivedita Academy, Chennai 600005. pp80, Rs25
Celebration of 119th Jayanti of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
At Ashram
(3.1.99)

The 119th Jayanti of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated at the Ashram in the usual elaborate manner on January 3. The Ramana Auditorium was decorated with flowers on a massive scale.

Actually the proceedings commenced even on the previous day with the after-dinner concert of Ramana music by the Ramananjali Group, Bangalore, led by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan.

Sri Bhagavan’s Jayanti comes off during the Tamil month of Marghazhi and hence the relevant special programmes in the early hours are integrated with the Jayanti celebrations.

After Dhanurmass puja at five and recital of Vishnu Sahasranama there was group singing of hymns in Tamil on Sri Bhagavan. This was followed by the brief puja to Sri Bhagavan at seven as per normal daily routine. Devotees were then served breakfast.

Chanting of Mahanarayana Upanishad commenced at eight. Special abhishekom to Sri Bhagavan known as Mahanyasa Purvaka Ekadasa Rudrabhishekam was performed.

A special programme was gone through at 10-30. The text of Swagatha Kusumanjali composed by Sri Jagadiswara Sastri on 3 January 1942 on the occasion of the 62nd Jayanti of Sri Bhagavan was read out in full. Sri Bhagavan’s Jayanti falls on January 3 at regular intervals of 19 years. Considering that the Jayanti came off on January 3 this year it was decided to commemorate this event by reprinting the devout hymn of Jagadiswara Sastry.
Sri J. Jayaraman read out the Sanskrit text. At the end of his recital of each (Sanskrit) verse, the corresponding Tamil and English translations were read out respectively by Sri A.S. Krishnamurthy and Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President.

In the afternoon the Amritavarshini Group, Bangalore, led by Smt. Sakkubhai Srinivasan gave an impressive performance of Ramana music.

The mandolin concert given by Sri U. Srinivas and party after dinner was very much appreciated by devotees.

During the proceedings the nagaswaram party led by Sri Kattimedu Pichiappa was constantly in attendance and gave a rendition of high quality Carnatic music at appropriate intervals.

Aradhana of Sri Chinna Swamigal

The Aradhana of Sri Chinna Swamigal was celebrated at the Ashram on January 31.

It was an elaborate function which was attended by a large gathering of devotees.

The linga over the samadhi was specially decorated with a variety of garlands. Elaborate abhishekan and puja were performed. Devotees were treated to lunch.

Opening of School at Tiruchuli

By Ashram President (7.3.99)

Sri Bhagavan had his preliminary education in the 1880's at the primary school at Tiruchuli, his birth-place. The school is being run by the Ramanathapuram Samasthanam.

The building was in need of repairs and hence the Ashram lent its good offices for the renovation work.
Celebration of Sivaratri at the Ashram

Sivaratri is observed in a very solemn manner at the Ashram. In addition to the usual pujas, four special pujas are performed during the night (all of which are preceded by abhisheka). Ekadasa Rudra parayana is also done before the third puja.

This year Sivaratri came off on February 14. Devotees kept vigil in the usual manner and many went round the Hill.

The following verse selected by Sri Bhagavan from the Purana explains the significance of Sivaratri.

The first day on which Lord Siva Himself took The strange form of the mountain-linga called Lord Arunachala, was Arudra in month of Margazhi. And that day when Lord Vishnu and the devas worshipped Him, From out of the effulgence taking birth, Was Sivaratri in the Masi month.

Seminar at Bangalore

Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore conducted a national seminar from March 13 to 14 on the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan.

The participants in the Kannada session on 13th March were: Swami Brahmananda, Sri Shadakshari, Swami Virajananda and Braham Sri Subbaraya Sarma. The participants in the English session on the 14th were: Ashram President Sri V.S. Ramanan, Sri A.R. Natarajan, Smt. Sulochana Natarajan, Swami Raghavesananda, Dr. Sarada and Dr. A.S. Venugopal Rao. There were cultural programmes on both days.

Sri Vidya Havan

This is an annual function 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 19.

The programme essentially consists of: 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, purusa twigs, sugarcane, charkarai pongal (sweet rice pudding), dhrvra grass, puffed rice, bilva leaves, white mustard and navadhanya.

Watching the Purnahuti, the final oblation to the fire is always a thrilling experience. It came off at four in the afternoon.

As usual a large gathering of devotees was present.
Discourses on *Periapuranam*

Brahma Shri Damodara Dikshidar, grand nephew of Sengalipuram Anantarama Dikshitar, the renowned *kalakshepar* exponent, gave discourses on *Periapuranam* for a week between January 4 and 10. An appreciative audience gathered at the New Hall of the Ashram on all the days to hear the discourses.

**Special Function at Ashram (14.4.99)**

The *Brahma Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan occurred on 14th April 1950. The anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma Nirvana* is usually celebrated on *Chaitra Krishna Paksha* Trayodasi, reckoning the day according to the Sauramana (*solar*) system of the Hindu calendar. This year, by a coincidence, the anniversary both according to *Chandramana* (*lunar*) system and the Gregorian calendar fell on 14th April '99.

A special function was organised on that day during which Sri Bhagavan's *Aksharamanamalai* was chanted before the *Nirvana* Room. A large number of devotees were present.

**Construction of Building of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad**

Performance of *Bhumi puja*

Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad has been carrying on its activities so far without a regular building of its own. A spacious site has since been acquired in the New Nallakunta area of Hyderabad with a view to construct a good building with necessary facilities.

*Bhumi puja* for the building was performed at the site on the morning of April 23. *Swami Ramanananda* of Sri Ramanasramam who was specially invited graced the occasion with his presence and also laid the foundation stone.

A large gathering of devotees was present.

Celebration of Fortyninth *Aradhana* of Sri Bhagavan At Ashram (13.5.99)

The forty ninth anniversary of the *Brahma Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated at the Ashram in the usual elaborate manner on May 13.

The after-dinner concert of Ramana Music in Classical Carnatic style by Smt. Ambika Kameshwar was the notable event of the previous day. Her performance was very impressive.

The proceedings on Aradhana Day commenced in the early hours with the recitation of *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* and *Ulladu Narpadu* of Sri Bhagavan.

This was followed by chanting of *Ramana Chaturimsat* and the first *puja* (during which milk is offered to Sri Bhagavan). Devotees were treated to breakfast.

After *Ekadasa Rudra Mahanyasa*, *abishekam* was done to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam. Simultaneously *Mahanarayana Upanishad* was chanted. Special *puja* was performed, followed by *homa*; the finale at quarter past eleven. Devotees were treated to lunch thereafter.

The following books were released on *Aradhana* Day: *Ramana Smriti* (Sri Ramana Maharshi Birth Centenary Offering — Revised Edition), *Ramana Maharshi and His philosophy of Existence* by Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan (third edition), *Eliam Onre* (Tamil), *Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshigala Ulladu Narpadu Anubandha Sahita* (Kannada), with notes and commentary (based on K.L. Sharma's commentary).

At St. Petersburg, Russia

*Arunachala Self-realisation Center, Sri Ramana Maharshi Stillsness Society, St. Petersburg, Russia,* celebrated the *Aradhana* of Sri Bhagavan on May 13.

The programme consisted of chanting the sacred name *Arunachala Siva*, the sacred mantra Om Namo *Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya*, as well as readings from the works of Sri Bhagavan and Sankara.

Oleg Mogilever (OM) spoke on the occasion. Devotees were treated to tea.

Publication of journal by Sri Ramana Vidya Trust, Madras

Sri Ramana Vidya Trust, Madras will be bringing out a quarterly journal in Tamil entitled *Ramanodayam*. The journal is devoted to Sri Bhagavan and his teachings.

The first issue is expected to be released in June/July.
Renovation work at
Sri Arunachaleswara Temple

The kumbhabhishekam of Sri Arunachaleswara Temple, Tiruvannamalai, was last performed in 1976. The temple is in need of repairs again. The renovation work is being taken up in stages with the help of donors who have come forward to bear the expenses for specific individual projects. The gopurams (towers) and vimanams (hemispherical structures over the sanctum) will be renovated one by one.

This is a preliminary to the eventual performance of kumbhabhishekam (consecration) for the temple as a whole.

The prescribed rituals were performed on two days — April 4 and April 5, at the temple.

Books in Punjabi
(Ashram Publications)

Shri G.S. Chauhan of Patiala, Punjab, has prepared and printed the following books containing teachings of Sri Bhagavan in Punjabi at his expense and given all rights to the Ashram. These books (published by the Ashram) are available for sale at the Ashram Book Depot.

1. Who am I? Rs. 15/-
2. Tattva Bodha Rs. 15/-
   (Spiritual instructions of Sri Maharshi)
3. Upadesha Sara of Sri Maharshi Rs. 30/-
   (with commentary by G.S. Chauhan)

Recent Publications by Ashram

The following are the recent publications of the Ashram (in addition to those released on Aradhana Day — mentioned separately in this bulletin)

Koham? — Sanskrit translation of Sri Bhagavan’s Who am I? by Sri Jagadiswara Sastry — in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan. Also contains transliteration into English. Price Rs. 30/-

Sarva Janottaram — Atma Sakshatkara Prakaranam: Sanskrit original in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan. Along with Tamil translation by Sri Bhagavan. Also contains transliteration into English. Price Rs. 30/-

Sri Ramanasraman (Tamil): By Sadhu Natana-nandar Price: Rs. 25/-

Sri Ramanasrama Vazhvuvin Ninavum (Tamil): By Suri Nagamma Price Rs. 40/-

Prices of Tamil Publications

The prices of the following Tamil publications have since been revised. The price (after revision) is indicated here.

Ramanasramathilirundu Kadithangal (Letters from Sri Ramanasramam)
   Translated from the Telugu Part I: Rs. 75/-
   Original of Suri Nagamma Part II: Rs. 75/-

Sri Ramanas Nool Thirattu (Collected Works of Sri Bhagavan):
   With explanatory notes by T.R. Kanakamma (Reprint)
   Part I: Rs. 75/-
   Part II: Rs. 75/-

Obituary

Premvati Khanna
(1909-98)

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Srimati Premvati Khanna at Jabalpur. She attained the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on March 10, 1998.

All members of the Khanna family are staunch devotees of Sri Bhagavan and it is a pleasure to receive them during their periodical visits here. The samadhi of Sri Hari Chand Khanna who passed away at the Ashram in 1984 is situated within the Ashram. The Khanna family have also constructed a guesthouse at the Ashram and donated it for the use of devotees.

She had her first darsan of Sri Bhagavan in the late 30’s. Once in 1946 Smt. Khanna entreated Sri Bhagavan to give her a simple method of sadhana as she had no scriptural knowledge and also found Self-enquiry too hard to do in the midst of family worries.

Sri Bhagavan graciously replied, “No learning or knowledge is necessary to know the Self, as no man required a mirror to see himself. … If you can do nothing more, at least continue saying ‘I’ to yourself mentally all the time, as advised in Who am I? whatever work you may be doing and whether you are sitting, standing or walking, ‘I’ is the name of God. It is the first and greatest of all mantras. Even OM is second to it.”

The end was peaceful. Conscious till the last moments Smt. Khanna passed away with the pranava (Om) on her lips.
Ranvir Khanna
(1931-99)

It is with profound regret that we report the death of Shri Ranvir Khanna, the eldest son of Hari Chand Khanna, at Bombay.

He was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on April 8.

Like other members of his family he was a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan who came on regular visits to the Ashram.

His last trip to the Ashram was made in special circumstances. He came to attend the first death anniversary of his mother which came off on 18 March. But the main purpose of his visit was rather different. Being a cancer patient his illness had been declared terminal by the doctors and he knew he would not live for long. Hence he desired to have his last darshan of Sri Bhagavan.

A second obituary notice of this kind about members of the same family in the same issue is an unusual feature and there is a sense of poignancy about it.

Palaniswamy Chettiar

We regret to report the death of Sri Palaniswamy Chettiar, known simply as 'Chettiar' to old devotees. He was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on the evening of 16 March at Coimbatore.

Chettiar was in charge of the Ashram store for years. His work for the Ashram in general, as well as his staunch support to the management during the '50s and '60s deserve to be mentioned.

He was a permanent resident of the Ashram for more than fifty years and was taken to Coimbatore by members of his family about a fortnight before his passing away. At the time of his death he was in his early eighties.

Aruna
(1929 — 1999)

We regret to report the death of Aruna, a well-known devotee who hailed from France. Her original name was Arlette Hans.

She was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on 25 March.

At a young age she came under the influence of Swami Siddeshwarananda of Sri Ramakrishna Mission, Paris. This gave a spiritual content to her life.

She was a qualified staff nurse who had undergone a regular course of study at the School of Medicine, Edinburgh, Scotland. The work she did as a nurse among the Eskimos at the North Pole is commendable.

Aruna came to the Ashram for the first time in 1960. She came again in 1969 and stayed here permanently, living in the vicinity of the Ashram.

She had great respect for Muruganar and rendered personal service to him during his prolonged illness. She was also of assistance to Professor K. Swaminathan in translating the works of Muruganar.

Her painstaking work in regard to translation of Sri Bhagavan's works into French will be remembered by devotees for long. She had a critical approach in literary matters and this enabled her to do this work with ability.

Sai Das
(1914-1999)

We regret to report the death of Sri Sai Das, a former resident of the Ashram, on January 6, at Anai Pirandan Village, a suburb of Tiruvannamalai.

With enthusiasm and characteristic efficiency Sai Das contributed towards the success of many projects at the Ashram — in particular during the 1967 Kumbhabhishekam and the construction of the samadhi of Sri Chinna Swamy.

May his soul rest in peace at the Feet of the Lord!

Vegi Venkateswara Rao

We regret to report the death of Sri Vegi Venkateswara Rao of Visakhapatnam, a devotee of long standing, on December 4, 1998.

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

Major Abdul Gaffar

Major Abdul Gaffar, a devotee of Sri Bhagavan, also known as Om Swami, passed away at Bangalore on 11 May. He was 82.

May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!
someone had lent her a body. Therese remained in this state for an entire week.

Once she declared that perfection can be achieved only by means of love. There is no other way. Our hearts are made for loving. Sometimes she tried to find another word to express love but words cannot convey all the vibrations of the soul. Hence she had to be content with this one word — love. Some religious sisters were full of the fear of the Lord, but Therese disliked fear. She found that with love she could not only go forward, but could also fly.

Hitherto Therese had remained a mere assistant in her duties because others had considered her to be too slow. But when the terrible epidemic of influenza ravaged France in the winter of 1891-92 resulting in the deaths of several nuns, Therese not only cared for the sick but also prepared the deceased for burial. She was helpful in other ways also. Now for the first time the religious community seemed to recognise her hidden abilities and strength of character.

It was part of Therese's sadhana to practise chastity, poverty and obedience at Carmel. She aspired to become a perfect person. She refused to be a tale-bearer; she was not interested in answering false accusations against her; she was pleasant even to sisters who treated her disagreeably; she ate whatever was given her. As Therese had a tendency to be impetuous, sometimes she had to control her anger.

Therese derived inspiration from an event in the life of Jesus relating to the wealthy tax collector Zacchaeus who, being a short man, climbed a tree in order to see Jesus as he was entering Jericho. When Jesus looked up and asked him to come down and even requested to stay at the home of Zacchaeus, the people complained that Jesus was going to be the guest of a sinner. In the same way that the King of Kings had humbled himself by associating with such a man, Therese said she wanted to hide her face. It can be regarded as an act of humility as many take pride in their appearance. Only the Beloved should be able to see her face. She was trying to purge herself of vanity.

While instructing her sister Celine about the importance of abandonment, Therese remarked that, quite rightly, directors help us to advance towards spiritual perfection by making us do various virtuous deeds. But her director, who was none other than Jesus, taught her to do everything out of love — Jesus, she stated, does everything: Therese, nothing. Jesus is the human personification of the Divine. Therefore one must totally abandon oneself to Jesus.

After three years of profession it is normal for a Carmelite to cease being a novice. But on September 8th 1893 Therese expressed a wish to remain a novice forever. Not wanting to be promoted to the higher status of a full-fledged nun, she chose the lower status of a minor. The principal virtues that novices should have are simplicity, docility, dependence and subjection to others. This meant that for the duration of her life Therese must ask permissions, follow a specified timetable and be present at the meetings of