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

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--- Editor.

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

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH is dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
EDITORIAL

Beyond Time and Space

In our cognition of the external world which is an easy, effortless process, we are aided by a space-sense as well as a time-sense. We see objects, their size and their particular location. We are aware that events occur in time. And, we are conscious of the stretch of duration or interval between two events or happenings. Thus time and space are prime elements in our apprehension, or basic knowledge of the world and its phenomena.

An important conclusion of modern physics is that time and space cannot be separated. According to Herman Minkowski, "From henceforth space in itself and time in itself sink to mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two preserves an independent existence."

The term 'space-time' is now common enough to be understood by the layman. It means the world is a four-dimensional manifold in which time is the fourth dimension, in addition to the three dimensions of space. This is a result of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, a monumental contribution to the world of science. Einstein describes the world as a space-time continuum.

Science and philosophy do not form a common area of interest. Nevertheless, there is an overlap between the two.

The theory of relativity is basically scientific in content. However there is a distinct metaphysical significance to it. This is valuable in so far as it provides a pointer to the higher truth, however indirect it may be.

Theoretical calculations as well as experimental observation have proved that
the velocity of light is constant throughout the universe, under all circumstances. This factor is of crucial importance to the theory of relativity.

It was expected by the earlier physicists that the earth’s motion would have a definite effect on the velocity of light.

The Michelson Morley experiment done in 1881 (and also repeated thereafter) proved that the orbital motion of the earth (ignoring the rotational motion) had no effect whatever on the velocity of light. The velocity of light was constant, regardless of the motion of the observer or the source (of light).¹

The negative result of the Michelson and Morley experiment stands in contradiction to the laws of classical physics like the Galilean law for addition of velocities as well as Newtonian concepts of absolute space and absolute time.

Einstein therefore proposed in 1905 that these concepts be discarded.

Einstein’s formulation is that neither space (length) nor time is absolute. The relevant measurements are true only for specific or definite frames of reference. With increasing speed objects suffer contraction.² Similarly time suffers dilation, that is, it slows down when the frame of reference changes. Viewed from any one system, the clocks of every other system moving with respect to it appear to be losing time. Simultaneity of events is relative.³ It is not absolute.

According to Einstein there is also no such thing as absolute motion. All motion is relative.

Once, in response to a request from Swami Madhavatirtha for his comments, Sri Bhagavan pointed out an error in the theory of relativity. (The Swami had sent his book entitled Maya to Sri Bhagavan earlier, for his perusal. The purpose of his work was to prove that Shankara’s concept of maya was borne out by the modern theory of relativity).

Swami Madhavatirtha says:

... This theory, as is well known, maintains that time and space are purely relative notions dependent entirely on the conditions governing the observer and the object under observation and that there is no such thing as objective time and space. When two observers, taking different positions in space, observe a particular event, they obtain different time-space measures, which will conflict with each other and necessarily vitiate any conclusion they may arrive at concerning the particular event.

¹ Precisely stated the law for propagation of light is: The velocity of light (in vacuum) is the same in all inertial frames of reference; it always has the value, \( c = 299,800 \) km per second (1,86,300 miles per second).

² An object (say, a metre rod) travelling at \( 0.9c \) (\( c \) = velocity of light) would shrink to about half its length.

³ Example:

If the street lights in New York and Boston (about 300 km apart) are switched on simultaneously (in the reference frame of the earth), say at 6 P.M. EST, then there would be a time difference as reckoned by an observer in the frame of reference of a spaceship travelling at \( 0.9c \) in the direction New York -> Boston. This would amount to (–) 0.00087 sec. It would appear to the observer (on the spaceship) that the lights in NY are switched on later than those in Boston by 0.00087 sec.
Sri Maharshi pointed out to me that the very presumption of two observers being situated at two given points is itself an unwarranted one. That is, taking for granted that there are two individual observers, the notion of relativity must itself apply to the space-measure separating the two. In other words, the space between one observer and another being relative and unreal, there cannot be more than one real observer.

I at once recognized my error in the treatment of the concept of *maya*. I should have shown in my book how the presumption (taken for granted by all scientists) that there can be two observers separated by a fixed time-space measure is itself subject to all the imperfections inherent in our perceptions, as established by the theory of relativity.

It was a revelation to me that Sri Maharshi could judge off-hand, as it were, such modern theories as that of relativity, proceeding entirely on the basis of his own experience of the Absolute.  

It is an error to presume that scientists do not have religious beliefs or convictions. Often his own work helps the scientist have a glimpse of the truth.

The observations of Sir Issac Newton, the great scientist — perhaps the greatest of them all — on the subject of the planetary system, time and space, reveal wisdom and spiritual insight of a very high order. It is clear that Newton saw the hand of God in the working of the universe.

Newton says:

...  

This most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.

And if the fixed stars are the centres of other like systems, these being formed by the like wise counsel, must be all subject to the dominion of One; especially since the light of the fixed stars is of the same nature with the light of the sun, and from every system light passes into all the other systems; and lest the systems of the fixed stars should, by their gravity, fall on each other, he hath placed those systems at immense distances from one another.

...  

He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures for ever, and is everywhere present; and by existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space.

...  

As a blind man has no idea of colours, so have we no idea of the manner by which the all-wise God perceives and understands all things. He is utterly
void of all body and bodily figure, and can therefore neither be seen, nor heard, nor touched; nor ought to be worshipped under the representation of any corporeal thing. We have ideas of his attributes, but what the real substance of anything is we know not.  

The advent of the theory of relativity does not mean the total abandonment of Newtonian physics. Newtonian mechanics still holds good in ordinary situations, that is, the differences between Newtonian and relativistic mechanics are not appreciable when we are dealing with objects travelling at ordinary speeds (not comparable to that of light). The differences are most pronounced in the case of fast particles (which travel at speeds comparable to that of light).

Science being an exact discipline, a scientist, even an outstanding one, functions only at a certain level. And studying the intricacies of science normally means going further down into the realm of maya.

However, on account of the integration of time and space as well as other features, the theory of relativity has introduced an element of subtlety into science. A study of this theory is rewarding for the reason that it takes us to the borderland between physics and metaphysics.

With reference to conclusions drawn from the theory of relativity, Sir James Jeans says:

We find that space means nothing apart from our perception of objects, and time means nothing apart from our experience of events. Space begins to appear merely as a fiction created by our own minds (our physical bodies are mere things in space), an illegitimate extension to Nature of a subjective concept which helps us to understand and describe the arrangement of objects as seen by us; while time appears as a second fiction, (without the past and the future, time as generally conceived is but a myth) serving a similar purpose for the arrangement of events which happen to us.

Sir Arthur Eddington says:

The frank realisation that physical science is concerned with the world of shadows is one of the most significant advances. . . . In the world of physics we watch a shadow-graph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over shadow paper.

It must also be remembered that we should cross even the level of metaphysics to arrive at the absolute truth.

The best explanation as to the nature of time and space can be given only by one who has transcended them, himself. Maharshi is one such and one understands from his teaching that time and space are only creations of the mind. They have no independent existence by themselves.

5 Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, Book III, General Scholium [explanatory note].
6 The New Background of Science.
7 The Nature of the Physical World.
It is not uncommon for a devotee to feel that he is at a disadvantage when he is (physically) far away from the master. Maharshi discouraged this view.

The explanation given to Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee by Maharshi is typical.

The following episode is on record:

The Professor asked Sri Bhagavan to extend His Grace to him although he would be a thousand miles off. Sri Bhagavan said that time and space are only concepts of mind. But swarupa (the Real Self) lies beyond mind, time and space. Distance does not count in the Self.

The lady with him was most reluctant to leave the master and return home. The master said, "Think that you are always in my presence. That will make you feel right." They left after dusk.³

Instruction on the same lines was given by Maharshi to a Swiss lady who visited him (in December 1936). An extract from the conversation is reproduced below:

Devotee: If one is miles away in Europe and invokes your aid? . . .

Maharshi: Where is Europe? It is in you.

Devotee: I have come here; I would like Maharshi to come there. (Saying it, she laughed gently... Silence for some minutes.)

Maharshi: You see the physical body and so you find limitations. Time and space operate on this plane. So long as you think of the gross body there will be differences found as different bodies. On the other hand, knowledge of the real Maharshi will set all doubts at rest.

Are you in India now? Or, is India in you? Even now this notion that you are in India must go. India is in you. In order to verify it, look to your sleep. Did you feel that you were in Europe or in India while asleep? You were nevertheless existing the same as now.

Space is in you. The physical body is in space, but not you.⁹

In a dialogue with a visitor recorded by Devaraja Mudaliar, Maharshi draws our attention to the changeless reality, the Self.

The following is the entry for 18-3-46 (in Mudaliar’s account):

One Mr. Girdhari Lal, an old resident of Aurobindo’s Ashram, came here last evening and is staying at the Ashram. He asked Bhagavan this morning. “It is said in the puranas that the kali yuga consists of so many thousands of years, and that so much of it has passed and that so much yet remains, etc. May I know when this yuga is to end”

Bhagavan: I don’t consider time real. So I take no interest in such matters. We know nothing about the past or the yugas which were in the past. Nor

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³Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 68, page 76 (1994 Edn.).
⁹Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 304, page 264 (1994 Edn.).
do we know about the future. But we know the present exists. Let us know about it first. Then all other doubts will cease. After a pause he added, "Time and space always change. But there is something which is eternal and changeless. For example, the world and time, past or future — nothing exists for us during sleep. But we exist. Let us try to find out that which is changeless and which always exists. How will it benefit us to know that the \textit{kal\textsc{i} yuga} started in such and such a year and that it would end so many years after now?" \footnote{Day by Day with Bhagavan, pp.151-152 (1977 Edn.).}

Scriptures are very clear on the point that the Supreme Being is free from the constraints of space and time. One of the names of Devi (Shakti) is: \textit{Desakalaparicchinna} (unlimited by space and time). Commenting on this Bhaskararaya says:

\begin{quote}
The \textit{Yoga Sutra} (1.26) says: "He is the Guru even of the ancients because he is not defined by time."
\end{quote}

\textit{Ancients}: Brahma etc. \textit{Guru}: father.

\textit{Limited by space}: The absolute non-existence of a thing in a certain place (saying) "This is not here."

\textit{Limited by time}: 'This was not before and it will not exist in future', a thing having no antecedence or precedence.

The \textit{Saura Samhita} says: "The Person is omnipresent like ether, as everything, except himself, is illusory; he is said to be unlimited as to space, time and things."

\textit{Limited as to the things}, relative difference (or mutual non-existence) between things such as 'this is here and that is not there, etc.' \footnote{Commentary on \textit{Lalita Sahasranama} (thousand names of Lalita), Name 701.}

In the verse that follows, Shankara explains how Brahman, the Reality which is unmanifest in its pristine state, still manifests itself as the universe. Ishwara, the Lord, uses his power (of \textit{maya}) for this purpose. The universe is created by an act of his will. Time and space are creations of \textit{maya}.

Shankara says:

\begin{quote}
To him who like a magician or even like a great \textit{yogi} displays, by his own power, this universe which at the beginning is undifferentiated like the sprout in the seed, but which is made differentiated under the varied conditions of space, time and \textit{karma} and posited by \textit{maya}: to him, the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!\footnote{Verse 3, \textit{Dakshinamurti Stotra} (Hymn to Dakshinamurti).}

The whole subject of time and space is summed up in one verse of Sri Maharshi. This reveals the ultimate truth.

Sri Maharshi says:

\begin{quote}
Apart from us where is time and where is space? If we are bodies, we are involved in time and space, but are we? We are one and identical now, then, and for ever, here, there, and everywhere. Therefore we, timeless and spaceless Being, alone are.\footnote{Verse 16, \textit{Reality in Forty Verses}.}
\end{quote}
Sri Bhagavan: His Early Years at Tiruvannamalai
(1896-98)

By B.V. Narasimha Swami

At The Father's Feet

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,
Now, rest my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful centre rest,
Nor ever from thy Lord depart,
With Him of every good possessed.¹

Alighting at Tiruvannamalai station on the morning of 1st September, 1896, Venkataraman beheld his 'promised land' in the 'starry-pointing' towers of Arunachaleswara Temple from afar. As with the Saint Nanda, the very sight of the towers filled his soul with joy, arising not merely from the sense of achievement but also from the close proximity to bliss itself. With quick steps and a bounding heart, he proceeded straight to the great temple. The gates of the three high compound walls and all the inner doors were open. There was not a soul beside him there; and it looked as though the Father was thus preparing to welcome his 'beloved son,' who marched straight to the inmost shrine, the Holy of Holies, without any hindrance and addressed Arunachaleswara (Lingam) thus:

O, God, obedient to Thy call,
Here have I come, deserting all.

That moment, all physical and mental excitement disappeared; he felt a soothing sensation; his cup of bliss was full to the brim.

"Tis done, the great transaction's done.

I am the Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine."²

That was the supreme moment of his life, the point at which the old and false worldly life may be said to be 'rung out', and the new and true life in the Father and the Self 'rung in.' He stood a while there in ecstasy, and left the sanctuary. He had sealed his future and delivered it over to God; and henceforward he was but a baby in the arms of his Father, to be tossed about, or played with, as He chose.

From the author's biography of Sri Bhagavan, Self-Realisation, Pub: Sri Ramanasramam (1936).
The contents of chapters IX and X are reproduced here. (To be precise the events recorded here occurred between September 1896 and August 1898.)

¹ From Sankey.
² Ibid.
"Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Vision of rapture burst on his sight.
Perfect submission, all is at rest.
He rests in the Lord, e'er happy and blest."

Now that he had seen the Lingam, he felt that it was not any mere external physical object, but the omnipresent, all-pervading Spirit, that had drawn him and was still drawing him away from his old groove. Three years passed, before he again went in to see Arunachala at the temple. Constant visits to the shrine, he felt, were needless in the face of the constant presence that filled his heart, of the hourly protection that he received, and of the strengthening realization that he was the immortal spirit.

The lives of saints constantly pass from the personal to the impersonal, and vice versa; moments of passive characterless consciousness alternate with deep devotion to a Personal God. The youth felt this truth and other aspects of truth in a hazy undefined way, for till then he had no book-learning, nor a teacher to analyse for him all he felt, to show him for instance that the finite proves, on analysis, to be the infinite; the Personal, to be the Impersonal; the many with forms and attributes, to be the Absolute Real.

When Venkataraman (or the young Swami as we may henceforth call him) left his Father's presence, where did he go?

"The world was all before him where to choose
His place of rest; and Providence his guide."

His choice was of course Tiruvannamalai, and in it, his Father's immediate presence, that is, the premises of the great temple. According to scripture (sastra) the proper residence for an anchorite (parivrajaka) is a temple, a hill, a cave, the foot of a tree or the banks of holy waters; and the young Swami found the temple (as many others before, and after him, did) to be the most convenient. The very atmosphere there is pure and laden with spiritual power. The constant peals of the temple bells, the frequent streams of pious visitors approaching their God, with Tevaram, Tiruppugazh and other hymns, the processions of the sacred images followed by a band of youths chanting aloud the sacred Vedas with the very accent and intonation which the rishis, the seers of the forest, employed thousands of years ago, and many other phases of religious life that one constantly meets with in these precincts, fully justified the selection so far as impulses to virtue and piety were concerned. If however one wished to get away even from external contacts and to commune in solitude with himself or his God, even then the precincts were particularly suited to one's needs. There were the flower garden, the plantain garden, the higher chambers of the numerous towers, especially the skyscraping eastern one of thirteen storeys, and many a nook and corner of this vast temple measuring over two furlongs in length.

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3 From Sankey.

4 The eastern tower is 216 feet high; the length of the temple is 1480 feet and its breadth 680 feet.
This is the first photograph of Sri Bhagavan on record (1900).
and one in breadth and the numerous
minor shrines therein — all these pro­
vide adequate solitude.

The ascetic has no need for secrecy
and he has nothing to keep or lock up.
Foxes have holes, and birds of the air
have nests, but the son of God hath no
place which he calls his own. Every place
is his; the earth’s surface everywhere is a
bed for him; the trees are his umbrellas,
the moon his lantern; and all the folk he
meets are his brothers and sisters, fathers
and mothers providing him with food.
Was the young Swami ever troubled by
the thought where he was to get a meal?
Never; never has he troubled himself to
think what he should drink, what he
should eat, and wherewithal he should
be clothed. His Father knows his need of
these things; and he thinks only of his
Father and his self (which is the kingdom
of God) and all these are added unto him.
The thousand-pillared hall served as the
first residence for the young ‘Brahmana
Swami’, — that is the name by which he
has always been known to the masses at
Tiruvannamalai. He sat there during his
period of samadhi without so much as a
cloth, much less a mat, a rug, or shawl to
spread on the cold slabs; his arm was his
pillow; his palm was his plate; and any
rag found by the wayside was his dress.5

On the very day of his arrival, he had
aimlessly walked on to the Ayyankulam
Tank and thrown away the bundle of
sweetmeat given to him at the Kilur
Bhagavatär’s house saying to himself, “To
this block (i.e., the body) why give any
sweetmeat?” As he walked back from the
tank, and came near the temple,
someone accosted him and asked, “You
want your tuft of hair to be removed, eh?”
“Yes,” replied the young Swami who was
immediately taken to a barber and had
the entire hair on the head removed.

As a boy at Dindigul and Madura, he
was noted for the beauty of his lock (fine
long jet-black locks), a fair complexion,
and a handsome face; and now at one
stroke he parted with his locks without a
sigh. A clean-shaven head was the token
of asceticism (sannyasa) i.e., of his part­ing with all the vanities of the world, and
entering upon a solemn course of life in
which, things far higher, far more seri­
ous, should occupy every minute of his
attention. He then tore his cloth to
shreds, and wearing one of them as a cod­
piece (kaupina) cast away the rest and all
his money, i.e., three rupees and a half.
He also removed the sacred thread from
his body and threw it away. He was not
going to touch, and never after did he
touch, money. These vows of austerity,
of “holy poverty,” were essential details
of the good path he had chosen, and they
served to set off and support his high
tapas. The wearing of the cod-piece was

5 (1) When there is the earth to lie upon, why trouble
about a bed? When one’s arm is readily available why
require pillows? When there is the palm of one’s hand,
why seek for plates and utensils? When there is the at­
mosphere or a bark or other similar stuff to clothe one­
selves in, what need is there of silks?
(2) Are there no rags by the wayside? Do not trees yield
their gifts? Have streams, that always support others,
dried up? Is not God (Sri Krishna) the friend of those
who have surrendered everything? Why then do the
Wise wait upon the rich, who are blinded by and in­
toxicated with their wealth?

— Srimad Bhagavata, II.2.
not merely for decency; it typified, and served as a reminder of, the internal fastening of the will, the vow of celibacy, of purity in thought, word and deed, the sublime vow not even to think of sex; for, as the great reformer and, spiritualiser of Judaism showed, lust in the heart is quite as ruinous to one’s spiritual flights as any lust in speech or act.

The casting away of the sacred thread had its solemn significance. The young Swami was realising his own nature, and discarding all that was not the self. The body was not himself; he had effectively discarded it by realising himself as the current or energy (avesam); and when the body was thus discarded, with it must go all distinctions and ideas based upon the notion that the body was the self. A boy, if asked suddenly “Who are you?,” says “I am a brahmin, I am a Hindu, I am the son of Ramaswami Iyer, I am a sixth form student, etc.” His real self never occurs to him. The young Swami, who was living in the Real, wished to cast away even the last vestiges of distinctions based on the body. The sacred thread reminded one of his claim to brahmin descent, breeding, and the superiority connected therewith. He was getting farther and farther away from such distinctions. He was inferior to none, superior to none. The sacred thread had done its duty so far; it had no further function for him to fulfil; and it was therefore cast away. “Love of wealth is the root of all evil”; so the Swami threw away what wealth he had in the shape of coins and clothes. He who feeds the raven and the sparrow, He who clothes the lilies of the field, was feeding and clothing him. Instinctively, that is, without any internal struggle or progressive effort, the young Swami reached these truths and denuded himself of everything that he could get rid of. After his shave he did not bathe, but addressed his body thus (mentally) — “Should this block be accorded the comforts of a bath?” — and passed on to the temple.

The few weeks of his stay at this mantapam were not all rosy and pleasant. One may feel quite sure that the young Swami would have at least his share of thorns and pin-pricks to endure. A young man of seventeen, without any kinsmen or supporters, moving up and down, never speaking, provoked first the curiosity and next the mischievous tendency of those about him, especially of the youth. They had seen already for four or five years, one Seshadri (later known as the famous Seshadriswami) walking up and down the streets of Tiruvannamalai, had called him a crazy fellow, and treated him as though he were mad. The new arrival, they thought, was a bird of the same feather and accordingly called him “Chinna Seshadri” (i.e., Seshadri the Younger) and paid him the compliment of flinging a few stones at him, as he sat in meditation. One day when the young

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He who has attained the Supreme Goal discards all such objects as name and form, and dwells as the embodiment of Infinite Consciousness and Bliss.

— Atma Bodha, v.40.
Swami sat on the central dais of that mantapam and plunged in meditation, he found stones whizzing from behind him, and in front of him. Luckily they did not touch his body.

So he moved to the dark recess of a large pit (known as Patala Lingam) in that same hall, where he hoped to be free from such attentions. The change however seems to have been from the frying pan into the fire. That dark pit despite the sacred images in it, was never lit, never swept and never cleaned. It was mostly damp and insect pests flourished luxuriantly there. As the young mouni sat there, enjoying the bliss of his soul, nettles, wasps, bees, ants, mosquitoes, and other vermin, the rightful occupants of the pit, attached themselves to the intruder's body and rejoiced in drinking his blood. The nether side of his thighs and legs as he sat there, was full of sores from which blood and pus issued. Even when one Ratnammal went into this dark pit to give him food, pointed out these disadvantages and invited him to her house, the Swami gave no response by act, word or even gesture; and when she left a newly washed cloth, requesting him to use it as a bed or a seat at least, to ward off the attack of these pests, he never cared even to touch it. Such was the intensity of his trance that he never noticed the pests. As for the kind attentions of mischievous youths, the Swami did not entirely escape them. Afraid of the darkness, they stood afar and hurled broken pots, which approached the pit and were shattered to pieces with a loud crash. Even the throwing of stones did not cease.

Seshadri Swami appears to have mounted guard over this young Swami at times. But unfortunately, his presence, on some occasions at any rate, increased the risk and not the comforts, of the ward.

One Venkatachala Mudali thus describes such an occasion which led to a change in the Swami's residence. One noon, going near the thousand-pillared hall, Mudali found a group of boys, mostly Moslem boys, hurling stones in the direction of the pit. Enraged at the sight, he ran, seized a twig, and was at the young scamps who fled away promptly. Suddenly from the dark recesses of the hall there issued forth the figure of Seshadri. Mudali was taken aback, but soon recovering himself, enquired of the Swami if the stones pelted by the boys had hurt him. "Oh, no," replied the Swami, "but go and see the Chinnaswami there," pointed towards the pit, and went away. Proceeding further inside, Mudali could make out nothing for a while, as he was coming from the glare into the darkness. In a few minutes, the faint outlines of a young face were discernible in that pit. Somewhat frightened, he went to the adjoining flower-garden where a sadhu was working with his disciples. Mentioning the facts to them he took some of them with him. Even then the youthful figure sat motionless and with closed eyes, despite the noise of the footsteps of this group. Then they lifted the Swami from the pit, carried him away.

\* The silent one.
from the hall up a flight of steps and deposited him in front of the shrine of Subrahmanya. The Swami still remained unconscious; his eyes still remained closed; evidently he was in deep samadhi. They noted the large number of sores caused by ants and fleas on the nether side of the Swami's thighs and legs, and wondered how anyone could remain unconscious of his body amidst such torture. Regarding it as irreverence, nay impertinence, to make any further noise in such presence, they bowed and went away.

**Years of Strenuous Life**

“The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight:
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward: in the night.”

*Brahmana Swami* was looked after by the *Mouna Swami*, who lived in the shrine of Subrahmanya and by a group of mendicant sadhus who lived in the adjoining garden. Some others also occasionally assumed care of him. But not one of these was attached to him permanently. *Mouna Swami* used to give him the milk which was washed out from Goddess Uma's shrine. This was a curious mixture of milk, water, turmeric powder, sugar, plantains, raw or ripe, and sundry other articles; and the passionless *Brahmana Swami* would gulp it down without any revulsion.

The temple priest, who noticed it one day, was greatly pained, and ordered that the pure milk used for the Goddess and immediately collected without any admixture, should thence forward be sent daily through the *Mouna Swami* in order that he may give part of it to *Brahmana Swami*. After a short stay of one or two months in the above shrine the Swami took up his residence in the adjoining flower garden. Here, under the oleander (alari) plants, several of them ten or twelve feet high, he would sit absorbed in deep samadhi, and sometimes discover at the end of it, that he was under a totally different plant many yards away from where he first sat. He next removed himself to the hall wherein the vehicles of the sacred images are kept. Here the sport of the mischievous lads compelled him to retreat far into the interior, and he would seat himself between the legs of a vehicle in the deep darkness, and lose himself in samadhi. Sometimes he would wake up to find his body underneath another vehicle, somehow having crossed many obstacles, without injury.

From this hall he moved on to the foot of a *bel* tree, then to the foot of an *iluppai* tree and, finally, to the Mangai Pilliar temple. The *iluppai* tree was quite close to a regular road within the first enclosure, the road intended for processions

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2. That *Brahmana Swami* needed looking after would appear sufficiently clear from Venkatachala Mudali’s account given in the previous chapter. A further proof of it may be cited here. The Swami was so rapt in his moods and would sit absorbed for so many hours (even eight or ten hours) at a stretch, without rising for a meal that food had sometimes to be thrust into his mouth and for about a month at the end of 1896, he was totally without any drapery — not wearing even his usual cod-piece.
within the temple. The Swami had already attracted the attention of the pilgrims and of the local public in the Kartikai season, November-December, 1896; and hence crowds were constantly flocking to see him. It was here that the first ‘disciple’ or permanent attendant on the Swami, Uddandi Nayinar, came to him. This Nayinar was a pious scholar who had read sacred books and books of philosophy, but found no peace of mind therein, and attained no realisation. He chanced to see the young Swami at the foot of the iluppai tree, rapt in ecstasy, and evidently oblivious of his body. “Here indeed,” said Nayinar to himself, “are realisation and peace, and here must I seek them.” Thenceforward, he was constantly at the Swami’s side, looking after his bodily needs, reciting Vasistham and Kaivalya Navanitam and waiting with eager expectation to hear from his lips some blessed words of upadesa (instruction) which might transform his learning into realisation and give him the peace supreme.

Nayinar’s presence kept off idle crowds and minimised the disturbance to samadhi. But he could not remain with the Swami always. During the long spells of Nayinar’s absence, not only was there frequent disturbance by the curious, but the pest of frolicsome youths also revived its attack. There was no dark pit here to hide in; and many of them still considered Swami a crazy youth who was lawful game for all their mirth and play. The liberties they took may be illustrated by citing one instance. One day as he sat in samadhi at the foot of the iluppai tree, forgetful of his body, some mischievous imp took the opportunity, when no one was in sight, of approaching him from behind and testing the intensity of his absorption. Liquid filth descended on the back of the Swami, thereby wetting his rags, and the lad must have tittered away wondering at his own cleverness. This young Swami was quite unaware of what had happened. Sometime later, his consciousness revived, by reason of his wet rags, perhaps; and he wondered why these should be wet. Then from the smell he gathered the prank that some little fellow had played upon him, though no boy was standing near, at the time. No anger was raised in his breast at such treatment.

“For a man’s own angry pride
Is cap and bells for a fool.”

Perhaps also, having played such a prank during his infancy, he thought, “Thus, the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.” Anyhow, this iluppai tree was a place of much disturbance.

At about this time, one Annamalai Tambiran came along with Uddandi Nayinar and was paying constant and reverent attention to this Swami. By pure austerity and singing of Tevaram with crowds of followers, he collected alms, fed

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9 The term ‘disciple’ should not be understood to imply a formal initiation (diksha). Brahmana Swami appears never to have formally given diksha or initiation to anyone, or undertaken the position of a ‘Guru’. But in fact he instructed many people who went to him; and these claim to be his “disciples.” The Swami himself had no Guru, and no diksha or initiation.

10 Standard Tamil works expounding advaita philosophy.

11 Tevaram is the name given to the sacred songs of the three Tamil poet-saints, Appar, Sundaramurti and Sambandar.
the poor, and maintained the worship of his *adheena* Guru in a building which was therefore known as Gurumurtam in a suburb of Tiruvannamalai. Happening once to pass near the *iluppai* tree, he was deeply impressed with the purity of heart and the ecstatic state of the young Swami and thereafter constantly accompanied Nayinar to see him. One day he told the Swami that his Guru’s shrine was away from the village, quite a retired spot where the Swami could carry on his meditation undisturbed by people and requested him to go there. The Swami agreed, and took up his residence at the shrine. The Tambiran daily recited there hundreds of *Tevaram* hymns, which were elevating and instructive, and which might even be a sufficient outfit for one’s spiritual culture.

As the Swami’s *vairagya* (non-attachment) matured, and as he continued to neglect his comforts and even cleanliness, he rose in popular esteem. His body was besmeared with unwashed dirt, his hair became one clotted mass, and his fingernails grew so long and curly that his hands were not useful for any purpose. He sat for some weeks on a floor which was always infested by ants, and despite their constant crawling and biting, he sat for hours with eyes closed, leaning against the wall in *samadhi*, and left on it the imprint of his back. The visitors could not endure even for a few minutes the ant trouble which he was enduring for hours, days and weeks, losing his body consciousness. The Swami was therefore provided after some time with a stool in a corner, the feet of the stool being placed in water. But even then the Swami leaning on the wall gave the ants their chance and left another wax impress on the wall which is even now faintly discernible. People swarmed to see this height of self-neglect; some said “This Swami must be very old,” and pointed to the length of his nails as proof. Many people at once jumped to the conclusion that, being so saintly, he could grant them all the boons they desired, such as wealth, health, issue, and salvation, and poured praises into his ears and offerings at his feet. All this developed the Swami’s humility, patience, endurance, and self-repression, — though to some extent they proved disturbances to his meditation, which however were minimised by a bamboo palisade around him.

His fame steadily increased as days passed; and this meant increased disturbance and increased self-restraint, though the question of food supply (if it ever was a question) was completely solved. For the first month or two at Gurumurtam, the Tambiran supplied *naivedya* i.e., food offered at the shrine of his Guru. The Tambiran then left, telling Nayinar to look after the Swami, and promised to return in a week. But in fact, he did not return till after a year. Nayinar also was called away to his *mutt* (religious foundation) in a few weeks after Tambiran left. So no one was left to look after the Swami. But with the increasing fame of the Swami, there was no difficulty in respect of food supply. Many came with their occasional food offerings, and a few undertook a regular supply of the daily food and each insisted...
that he or she should have the merit of feeding this ascetic. The only difficulty
was to keep the rush away from the Swami; and after Nayinar left, there was
no permanent attendant to perform that function. In a few months, even this was solved.

There was a Malayali by name Palaniswamy carrying on the worship of
God Vinayaka in the town, and living upon the naivedya (food offered to the
God) as his solitary meal for the day, not even using salt for seasoning his food.
One Srinivasa Iyer, seeing him at this devotion to the image, advised him to
drop or alter his course. “What use,” said Iyer, “is there in spending your life-
time with this stone Swami? There is a young Swami in flesh and blood at
Gurumurtam. He is steeped in austerities (tapas) like the youthful Dhruva men-
tioned in the Puranas. If you go and serve him, and adhere to him, your life would
serve its purpose.” Others also pointed out to him that the Swami had no
attendant, and that it was a blessing to serve such a rapt soul. Spurred on by
such encomia, Palaniswamy went to Gurumurtam, saw the Swami and at once
realised that he had discovered his Saviour. At first, Palaniswamy continued his
worship at the Vinayakar temple, but in a short while, his faith in the living Guru
increased and became all-absorbing; and he discontinued his worship at the tem-
pile. Thus the old order changed, yielding place to new; and God (Vinayaka)
fulfilled12 Himself by sending the devotee on to Brahmana Swami, who
thenceforward was his all in all, his only
raft to cross this ocean of troubles, and
his anchor for the remaining term,
(nearly twenty-one years) of his life.
Palaniswamy attended constantly on the
Swami, in fact followed him like a shadow,
received the bits of food-offerings sup-
plied, mixed them up and offered them,
(a cupful at noon) to the Swami as his
mid-day meal, and returned the rest of
the offerings to those who brought them,
as bhuktasesha or prasada, that is, the bless-
ing of the Swami.

One or two incidents of the Swami’s
life at Gurumurtam may be set down
here, as indicative of his attitude towards
others and their attitude towards him.

The Tambiran was getting over-
zealous in his attention; and one day he
was arranging to get oil, sandal paste, etc.,
and making great preparation for treat-
ing the young Swami, exactly as the sac-
cred idol in all temples is treated. He
proposed, in fact, to pour over the Swa-
mi’s head oil, water, milk, food, etc. The
young Swami did not relish the proposed
treatment. So the next day before the
Tambiran arrived with food, the young
Swami had written with a piece of char-
coal upon the adjoining wall, the Tamil
words Jdarku tondi idave which means,
“This (food) alone is the service (needed)
for this (body).” When the Tambiran

12 It is hardly necessary to assure the readers that no dis-
respect towards or attack against worship of idols is
intended by the above recital or a similar recital in
Chapter XIV. See also for Maharashi’s views on the sub-
ject, infra.
came and placed the food before him, the Swami pointed to the writing on the wall, and thus made him understand that the ostentatious worship proposed by him was unacceptable. Incidentally, the revelation was first made to the Tiruvannamalai public that this Brahmana Swami or Gurumurtam Swami was a person with education who could write Tamil — even good Tamil.

This discovery led to the early disclosure of his identity. Amongst the sincere admirers that constantly visited him was a Taluk Head Accountant, Venkatarama Iyer. When he found that the Swami could write, the idea seized this elderly gentleman, that he must learn the identity of the Swami, that is, his name and the place he hailed from. In the presence of Tambiran and others he put the question to the Swami, who however remained silent, despite repeated questions. Iyer, with the persistence of Delilah and Vivien, declared that he would not move from there till he should learn those facts, even if his prolonged stay there should involve official trouble due to his absence at the Taluq Office, and intensity of hunger by keeping away from home. Moved by the ardour of this aged admirer's zeal, the Swami then wrote down his name and village as "Venkataraman, Tiruchuzhi." The officer wondered what "Tiruchuzhi" was, being unacquainted with any such place. The Swami then picked up a copy of Periapuranam lying by his side, and showed him the name 'Tiruchuzhi,' as that of a village honoured by the classic song of Sundaramurti Swami.

There were tamarind trees in the garden surrounding Gurumurtam and those in charge of it had gone away somewhere one day. A gang of thieves came in and wanted to collect and carry off the tamarind produce. Noticing the silent Swami at the foot of the tamarind tree without any attendant, one thief said to another, "I say, bring some kalli pal (the corrosive milk juice of euphorbia tirucalli); let us throw it into this man's eyes; and let us see if he will speak or not." The Swami who maintained his mounam (rule of silence), neither spoke nor moved; he showed no concern as to what might happen to his body, or to the tamarind fruit. So, another broke out and said, "Oh, don't mind him, what does he do unto us? Let us get along." So, without molesting him, they carried off the plunder. Alike at the time of the plunder, as at the time of the threat, the Brahmana Swami merely looked on unconcerned.

Tennyson puts it thus:

... let the world have its way:
For Nature is one with rapine, a harm
no preacher can heal.
The May fly is torn by the swallow, the
sparrow spear'd by the shrike,
And the whole little wood where I sit
is a world of plunder and prey.

... for the maker's drift is dark, an Isis
hid by a veil.
Who knows the ways of the world, how
God will bring them about?
I have not made the world, and he
that made it will guide.

The Swami's daily routine of life, during the year and a half that he stayed at Gurumurtam, was to be in rapt samadhi, to get disturbed by the noise of visitors, and by the dinner cup — a sort of *olla podrida*. This was his only meal and sufficed just to keep body and soul together; no wonder, the former grew thin and looked like a skeleton. He had no exercise and was constipated; and sometimes days passed before a slight relief was afforded to the distended bowels. He would sit on the bench, mostly dazed, not knowing and not caring if it was morning or evening, one day or another of the week. He would have just strength and clearness enough to retain his sitting posture, but if he tried to get up, he was unsuccessful. He would just lift himself up some inches, and feeling giddy, sink back into his seat as the safer position. Again, he would try, with similar results. Only after repeated efforts could he get up and go out. On one such occasion, he had got up and was at the door when he found Palaniswamy holding him with both his arms. Reproachfully, he asked his faithful Adam, "Why do you hold me?" The latter replied, "Swami was about to fall, and so I held him and prevented the fall." The Swami was at the time holding the door with both his arms, and was not aware that he was about to fall.

After eighteen months had been spent thus in the midst of visitors' disturbance, to prevent which Palaniswamy often locked the Swami in when he went out, the Swami and his attendant moved on to the adjoining mango grove, which none was allowed to enter, except with the permission of the owner, one Venkatarama Naicker. The Swami and Palaniswamy, each occupied a field-watchman's loft, (*paran*) under the shade of a mango tree. Here unmolested by visitors, they felt freer; and six months were thus happily spent. It was during these months that Palaniswamy having ample leisure and access to a library in the town, brought several Tamil books on *Vedanta*, e.g., *Kaivalya Navanitam*, *Vedanta Chudamani*, *Vasishtham*, etc. He was struggling painfully with them, word by word, in the Swami's presence. The Swami, wishing to lighten his labour, took each book from him, rapidly absorbed its contents, and retaining the same in his memory, imparted the gist of it to the wondering disciple. The study of books was not necessary for his (the Swami's) religious contemplation or realisation. That had been achieved already and required no fresh buttress. It was the need to explain its ethical and metaphysical basis and to answer the questions of those who resorted to him, book in hand or after studying books, that made him look into such books. With his naturally clear intellect and retentive memory, assisted by his illuminating experience, he easily understood and explained them to his questioners. It is in the same way he picked up a knowledge of religious books in other languages also, e.g., in Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam, as also by moving closely with those who had considerable mastery of these languages and in course of time he was able to express his living thought in writing in all these languages.
The Soul Of Silence

By Swami Tapovan Maharaj

SILENCE is Truth. Silence is Bliss. Silence is Peace. And hence Silence is Atman. To live this Silence as such is the Goal. It is moksha. It is the end of the endless cycle of births and deaths. Sri Ramana Maharshi was an embodiment of such Silence. He was the Silence Itself. Therefore he did not preach the Silence. Only when one comes back to the 'noisy' from the Silence, can one preach the Silence. How can the Silence preach Itself through Silence?

Nearly thirty-five or forty years ago, I had the good fortune of having the darshan of Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai when he was living there in a cave along with his mother and brother. One midday, a young brahmachari at that time, I went up the Hill to the cave, saw the Maharshi and, placing a bunch of bananas at his feet, bowed and sat before him. At the same moment some monkeys jumped on to the scene, scrambled for the fruits and ran away with them.

Maharshi looked lovingly into my face. That was all. He spoke but silence — not a word passed between us. A supreme, dynamic and divine Silence prevailed. An hour passed by, all in Silence. He rose for his meals (bhiksha). I too rose from my seat, bowed again and walked down the Hill. The divine Silence sank deeper and deeper into me at each step! Someone came running behind and pressed me to take some prasad. Thankfully I declined. I was full — full with the Silence. Maharshi called him back and advised him not to press me. Then I left the cave and walked away.

Maharshi was an idol of Peace and Silence. It is the first duty of all those who admire and follow him to seek after that Divine Silence. The enquiry into that Divine Silence is but the enquiry "Who am I?"

Oh, man! Enquire and be immersed in that inner Silence. Do all works of this world to reach that goal, to attain that Divine Silence. If you have already attained that Silence, do strive for loka sangraha (the salvation of the world) if you choose to do so. The ocean’s surface dances in waves, laughs in sparkling foam, roars as its thunderous waves clap and clash! And yet deep in its inner vaults it rests in eternal Silence and peace. Without such a divine and spiritual depth, the works and activities of this universe prove worthless and aimless.

“Works should be undertaken and pursued to take us ultimately to the workless Abode of Divine Silence and endless Peace.” This is the secret doctrine of all our Vedas and ancient scriptures.

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, January 1980.
Manisha Panchakam
(Five verses on the Guru)

By Shankaracharya

The story goes that when Shankaracharya was walking along the streets of Benares one day, he saw a chandala (a person belonging to a community of outcastes) coming towards him. Not wishing to be polluted by the proximity of the chandala the Acharya called out, 'Go away, go away'. The chandala, however stood his ground. In fact he was Lord Shiva come in disguise to test the Acharya's spiritual maturity and to teach him that Advaita (the doctrine of non-duality) is not merely a matter of intellectual understanding but has to be put into practice in everyday life. He said: 'O distinguished ascetic! Is it this body built up by food that you wish to keep at a distance from that body which is also built up by food, or do you wish to separate Pure Awareness which is present here from the same Awareness present there? Is it not a delusion to think that there are distinctions like brahmin and svapacha in our innermost essence which is like a waveless ocean of spontaneous bliss? Is there any difference in the Sun reflected in the water of the holy Ganges and that which is reflected in a stagnant pool in a street of chandalas? Again, is there any difference between the space enclosed in a vessel made of gold and that enclosed in a pot made of clay?' On hearing these words the Acharya realised his mistake. He composed five verses on the spot to show that there are no distinctions in the pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss that is Brahman. Shiva then revealed Himself to him and blessed him.

These five verses are known as the Manisha Panchakam as each of them ends with the words manisha mama, meaning 'my opinion' or 'what I think'. The following is a free rendering of them:

1. 'I am truly Pure Awareness which clearly manifests itself in the states of waking, dreaming and sleeping, which is the cognizer of the universe and is immanent in all bodies from that of Brahma (the four-faced god) to that of an ant. I am not an object of perception (like the body).' One who has this firm conviction is, in my opinion, a true Guru, whether he is a brahmin or a chandala.

2. 'I am Brahman. This entire universe is merely a play of Consciousness. It is simply imagined by me on account of nescience caused by the three modalities (gunas). One who has this firm conviction about the Supreme Being

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, January 1974.

1 Another name for chandala, literally, one who cooks dog's flesh.
which is pure and eternal bliss is, in my opinion, a Guru, whether he is a brahmin or a chandala.

3. The entire universe is constantly changing. One who has heard this from the Guru's lips will sincerely and ceaselessly think about Brahman with a tranquil mind. He will burn up the sins committed by him in the past and those that may be committed in the future in the fire of Self-knowledge, and will let his body experience the consequences of his acts which have come to fruition in this life. This is my opinion.

4. Pure awareness is experienced inwardly as 'I' by all beings, celestial, human and inferior. The body, the sense organs and the mind which are inert by nature become sentient (as it were) by Its effulgence (i.e. intelligence). The Yogi who always contemplates with a tranquil mind this effulgence which, like the Sun, is hidden by the (very) objects which it illumines, is, in my opinion, the true Guru.

5. The bliss enjoyed by Indra and other celestial beings is but an infinitesimal portion of the ocean of bliss (which is Brahman). The sage experiences the latter in his extremely tranquil mind. He whose mind is dissolved in the eternal ocean of bliss is verily Brahman, not merely a knower of Brahman. Such a person is rare and is adored by Indra, the lord of the devas. This is my opinion.

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SRI BHAGAVAN'S SELECTIONS FROM YOGA VASISHTA

Steady in the state of fulness which shines when all desires are given up, and peaceful in the state of freedom in life, act playfully in the world, O Raghava!

Inwardly free from all desires, dispassionate and detached, but outwardly active in all directions, act playfully in the world, O Raghava!

Outwardly full of zeal in action but free from any zeal at heart, active in appearance but inwardly peaceful, work playfully in the world, O Raghava!

Free from egoism, with mind detached as in sleep, pure like the sky, ever untainted, act playfully in the world, O Raghava!

Conducting yourself nobly and with kindly tenderness, outwardly conforming to conventions but inwardly renouncing all, act playfully in the world, O Raghava!

Quite unattached at heart but for all appearance acting as if with attachment, inwardly cool but outwardly full of fervour, act playfully in the world, O Raghava!

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Lit. perishing.
The Bhagavad Gita

Chapter XI

VISION OF THE DIVINE FORMS AS INCLUDING ALL FORMS

English rendition by William Quan Judge

W.Q. Judge was a great Theosophist whose favourite book was the Gita. His rendition of Chapters II and XVIII have been published in these columns earlier.¹

ARJUNA: My delusion has been dispersed by the words which thou for my soul's peace hast spoken concerning the mystery of the adhyatma — the spirit. For I have heard at full length from thee, O thou whose eyes are like lotus leaves, the origin and dissolution of existing things, and also thy inexhaustible majesty. It is even as thou hast described thyself, O

mighty Lord; I now desire to see thy divine form, O sovereign Lord. Wherefore, O Lord, if thou thinkest it may be beheld by me, show me, O Master of devotion, thine inexhaustible Self.

**KRISHNA:** Behold, O son of Pritha, my forms by hundreds and by thousands, of diverse kinds divine, of many shapes and fashions. Behold the Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Aswins, and the Maruts; see things wonderful never seen before, O son of Bharata. Here in my body now behold, O Gudakesha, the whole universe animate and inanimate gathered here in one, and all things else thou hast a wish to see. But as with thy natural eyes thou art not able to see me, I will give thee the divine eye. Behold my sovereign power and might!

**SANJAYA:** O king, having thus spoken, Hari, the mighty Lord of mysterious power, showed to the son of Pritha his supreme form; with many mouths and eyes and many wonderful appearances, with many divine ornaments, many celestial weapons upraised; adorned with celestial garlands and robes, anointed with celestial ointments and perfumes, full of every marvellous thing, the eternal God whose face is turned in all directions. The glory and amazing splendour of this mighty Being may be likened to the radiance shed by a thousand suns rising together into the heavens. The son of Pandu then beheld within the body of the God of gods the whole universe in all its vast variety. Overwhelmed with wonder, Dhananjaya, the possessor of wealth, with hair standing on end, bowed down his head before the Deity, and thus with joined palms addressed him.

**ARJUNA:** I behold, O God of gods, within thy frame all beings and things of every kind; the Lord Brahma on his lotus throne, all the Rishis and the heavenly serpents. I see thee on all sides, of infinite forms, having many arms, stomachs, mouths, and eyes. But I can discover neither thy beginning, thy middle, nor thy end, O universal Lord, form of the universe. I see thee crowned with a diadem and armed with mace and chakra, a mass of splendour, darting light on all sides; difficult to behold, shining in every direction with light immeasurable, like the burning fire or glowing sun. Thou art the supreme inexhaustible Being, the end of effort, changeless, the Supreme Spirit of this universe, the never failing guardian of eternal law. I esteem thee Purusha; I see thee without beginning, middle, or end, of infinite power with arms innumerable, the sun and moon thy eyes, thy mouth a flaming fire, overmastering the whole universe with thy majesty. Space and heaven, and earth and every point around the three regions of the universe are filled with thee alone.

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2 *Hari,* an epithet of Krishna, meaning that he has the power to remove all difficulty.

3 Arjuna.

4 This is the Hindu mode of salutation.

5 These are the uragas, said to be serpents. But it must refer to the great masters of wisdom, who were often called serpents.

6 Among human weapons this would be known as the discus, but here it means the whirling wheels of spiritual will and power.

7 *Purusha,* the Eternal Person. The same name is also given to man by the Hindus.
The triple world is full of fear, O thou mighty spirit, seeing this thy marvellous form of terror. Of the assemblage of the gods some I see fly to thee for refuge, while some in fear with joined hands sing forth thy praise; the hosts of the Maharshis and Siddhas, great sages and saints, hail thee, saying 'svasti,' and glorify thee with most excellent hymns. The Rudras, Adityas, the Vasus, and all those beings — the Sadhyas, Vishwas, the Ashwins, Maruts, and Ushmapas, the hosts of Gandharbhas, Yakshas, and Siddhas — all stand gazing on thee and are amazed. All the worlds alike with me are terrified to behold thy wondrous form gigantic, O thou of mighty arms, with many mouths and eyes, with many arms, thighs and feet, with many stomachs and projecting tusks. For seeing thee thus, touching the heavens, shining with such glory, with widely opened mouths and bright expanded eyes, my inmost soul is troubled and I lose both firmness and tranquillity, O Vishnu. Beholding thy dreadful teeth and thy face like the burning of death, I can see neither heaven nor earth; I find no peace; have mercy, O Lord of gods, thou Spirit of the universe!

The sons of Dhritarashtra with all these rulers of men, Bhishma, Drona and also Karna and our principal warriors, seem to be impetuously precipitating themselves into thy mouths terrible with tusks; some are seen caught between thy teeth, their heads ground down. As the rapid streams of full flowing rivers roll on to meet the ocean, even so these heroes of the human race rush into thy flaming mouths. As troops of insects carried away by strong impulse find death in the fire, even so do these beings with swelling force pour into thy mouths for their own destruction. Thou involvest and swallowest all these creatures from every side, licking them in thy flaming lips; filling the universe with thy splendour, thy sharp beams burn, O Vishnu. Reverence be unto thee, O best of Gods! Be favourable! I seek to know thee, the Primeval One, for I know not thy work.

KRISHNA: I am Time matured, come hither for the destruction of these creatures; except thyself, not one of all these warriors here drawn up in serried ranks shall live. Wherefore, arise! Seize fame! Defeat the foe and enjoy the full grown kingdom! They have already been slain by me; be thou only the immediate agent, O thou both-armed one. Be not disturbed. Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna, and all the other heroes of the war who are really slain by me. Fight. Thou wilt conquer all thine enemies.

SANJAYA: When he of the resplendent diadem heard these words from the mouth of Keshava, he saluted Krishna with joined palms and trembling with fear, addressed him in broken accents, and bowed down terrified before him.

ARJUNA: The universe, O Hrishekesh, is justly delighted with thy glory

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This cry is supposed to be for the benefit of the world, and has that meaning.

All these names refer to different classes of celestial beings, some of which are now called in theosophical literature, "elemental"; the others are explained in H.P. Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine.

Arjuna was a famous archer who could use the celestial bow, Gandiva, with either hand equally well.

Arjuna wore a brilliant tiara.

Krishna, by other names.
and is filled with zeal for thy service; the evil spirits are affrighted and flee on all sides, while all the hosts of saints bow down in adoration before thee. And wherefore should they not adore thee, O mighty Being, thou who art greater than Brahma, who art the first Maker? O eternal God of gods! O habitation of the universe! Thou art the one indivisible Being, and non-being, that which is supreme. Thou art the first of Gods, the most ancient Spirit; thou art the final supreme receptacle of this universe; thou art the Knower and that which is to be known, and the supreme mansion; and by thee, O thou of infinite form, is this universe caused to emanate. Thou art Vayu, God of wind, Agni, God of fire, Yama, God of death, Varuna, God of waters; thou art the moon; Prajapati, the progenitor and grandfather, art thou. Hail! Hail to thee! Hail to thee a thousand times repeated! Again and again hail to thee! Hail to thee from before! Hail to thee from behind! Hail to thee on all sides, O thou All! Infinite is thy power and might; thou includest all things, therefore thou art all things!

Having been ignorant of thy majesty, I took thee for a friend, and have called thee 'O Krishna, O son of Yadu, O friend,' and blinded by my affection and presumption, I have at times treated thee without respect in sport, in recreation, in repose, in thy chair, and at thy meals, in private and in public; all this I beseech thee, O inconceivable Being, to forgive.

Thou art the father of all things animate and inanimate; thou art to be honoured as above the guru himself, and worthy to be adored; there is none equal to thee, and how in the triple worlds could here be thy superior, O thou of unrivalled power? Therefore I bow down and with my body prostrate, I implore thee, O Lord, for mercy. Forgive, O Lord, as the friend forgives the friend, as the father pardons his son, as the lover the beloved. I am well pleased with having beheld what was never before seen, and yet my heart is overwhelmed with awe; have mercy then, O God; show me that other form, O thou who art the dwelling place of the universe; I desire to see thee as before with thy diadem on thy head, thy hands armed with mace and chakra; assume again, O thou of a thousand arms and universal form, thy four-armed shape!

KRISHNA: Out of kindness to thee, O Arjuna, by my divine power I have shown thee my supreme form, the universe, resplendent, infinite, primeval, and which has never been beheld by any other than thee. Neither by studying the Vedas, nor by alms-giving, nor by sacrificial rites, nor by deeds, nor by the severest mortification of the flesh can I be seen in this form by any other than thee, O best of Kurus. Having beheld my form thus awful, be not disturbed nor let thy faculties be confounded, but with fears allayed and happiness of heart look upon this other form of mine again.

14 That is, that into which the universe is resolved on the final dissolution.

15 Arjuna had been accustomed to see Krishna in his four-armed form, not only in the images shown in youth, but also when Krishna came into incarnation, and could therefore look on the four-armed form without fear.
SANJAYA: Vasudeva having so spoken, reassumed his natural form; and thus in milder shape the Great One presently assuaged the fears of the terrified Arjuna.

ARJUNA: Now that I see again thy placid human shape, O Janardana, who art prayed to by mortals, my mind is no more disturbed and I am self-possessed.

KRISHNA: Thou hast seen this form of mine which is difficult to be perceived and which even the gods are always anxious to behold. But I am not to be seen, even as I have shown myself to thee, by study of the Vedas, nor by mortifications, nor alms-giving, nor sacrifices. I am to be approached and seen and known in truth by means of that devotion which has me alone as the object. He whose actions are for me alone, who esteemeth me the supreme goal, who is my servant only, without attachment to the results of action and free from enmity towards any creature, cometh to me, O son of Pandu.

Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Eleventh Chapter, by name —

THE VISION OF THE DIVINE FORM
AS INCLUDING ALL FORMS

16 A name of Krishna.

SRI BHAGAVAN'S DAYS ON THE HILL
By A. Devaraja Mudaliar

Bhagavan spoke about the way in which in the old days he used to climb to the peak at any time he felt like it, and that by any route or even no route. He said only the grass-cutters knew some of the routes he used. "Sometimes people would come from Madras and other parts and, setting out to reach the top of the hill, would stray near Skandasramam. Finding me seated there, they would ask me for the route to the hill top. When I told them the route was to their right and turned northward, some would say, 'Do you know who we are and wherefrom we come? We are from Madras. None of your tricks with us. The top is here straight above us and you want to lead us astray.' I used to keep quiet. They would try to climb in a straight line, and after a long time, they would return tired out, finding that all their efforts to reach the peak were in vain. Nearing me they would bow their heads in shame and go away, avoiding me."
The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk

By William Cowper

This well known poem is based on an episode in the life of Alexander Selkirk (Selcraig), a Scottish sailor.

Cowper here gives a poetic picture of the thoughts crossing the mind of a man living alone.

Selkirk lived all alone for more than four years on Mas a Tierra, one of the uninhabited islands known as the Juan Fernandez group, off the coast of Chile. He was not exactly marooned, but put ashore at his own request, following a dispute with his captain (in the course of an expedition). He was subsequently rescued. He then continued his career as a sailor and died in harness on board the Weymouth, a British man-of-war.

We are fortunate to have the comments of Sri Bhagavan on this poem. He has explained the true significance of solitude in the following passage:

14th February, 1938

Quoting Alexander Selkirk’s soliloquy Sri Bhagavan said, “The happiness of solitude is not found in retreats. It may be had even in busy centres. Happiness is not to be sought in solitude or busy centres. It is in the Self”.

I am monarch of all I survey,
    My right there is none to dispute;
From the centre all round to the sea
    I am lord of the fowl and the brute.
O solitude! where are the charms
    That sages have seen in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms
    Than reign in this horrible place.

I am out of humanity’s reach,
    I must finish my journey alone,
Never hear the sweet music of speech;
    I start at the sound of my own,
The beasts that roam over the plain
    My form with indifference see;

1 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No.459, p.435 (1994 Edn.).
They are so unacquainted with man,
    Their tameness is shocking to me.

Society, friendship, and love
    Divinely bestow’d upon man,
O had I the wings of a dove
    How soon would I taste you again!
My sorrows I then might assuage
    In the ways of religion and truth,
Might learn from the wisdom of age,
    And be cheer’d by the sallies of youth.

Ye winds that have made me your sport,
    Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial endearing report
    Of a land I shall visit no more;
My friends, do they now and then send
    A wish or a thought after me?
O tell me I yet have a friend,
    Though a friend I am never to see.

How fleet is a glance of the mind!
    Compared with the speed of its flight,
The tempest itself lags behind,
    And the swift-winged arrows of light.
When I think of my own native land
    In a moment I seem to be there;
But, alas! recollection at hand
    Soon hurries me back to despair.

But the seafowl is gone to her nest,
    The beast is laid down in his lair;
Even here is a season of rest,
    And I to my cabin repair.
There’s mercy in every place,
    And mercy, encouraging thought!
Gives even affliction a grace
    And reconciles man to his lot.
The Extraordinary Life of Saint Marie-Eustelle

By Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma

The author was inspired to write this article on seeing the comments of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi on St. Estella and her teachings (reproduced below).

17th January 1937

In the morning Sri Bhagavan read out a short passage from St. Estella in the Tamil Ramakrishna Vijayam. Its purport is:

"Your enemies are lust, passion, etc. If you feel injured turn within and find out the cause of the injury. It is not external to you. The external causes are mere superimpositions. If you cannot injure yourself, will the all-merciful God injure you in any manner?"

Sri Bhagavan further said that St. Estella was a good saint, whose teachings were quite sound.¹

Known as the Angel of the Eucharist, Eustelle was born on April 19th 1814 in the town of Saintes which is near the Atlantic coast of France. Interestingly enough, in French the word “saintes” means “female saints.”

Despite her saintly disposition, Marie-Eustelle Harpain (1814-1842) was never canonized. Nevertheless, she was a highly venerated saint. It is a pity that many God-realised persons have not been canonized.

Her father Rene, a thatcher of roofs, was doing his Christian duties at the beginning but he did not persevere for long. He was led astray by bad people and he became a drinker. Rene stopped celebrating Easter and attending church. He was part of a group of persons who disliked the piety of Eustelle. She found his conduct and remarks objectionable. He was earthbound. In contrast, she was religious, delicate and sensitive. Her father’s behaviour pained her. Eustelle prayed for her father’s soul and made sacrifices to God.

Although in her lifetime she did not have the satisfaction of seeing her dear

¹ Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 329, p.297 (1994 Edn.).
Saint Marie-Eustelle
father's conversion or return to God, we know that Eustelle, after her own death, was responsible for intercession with the Divine on his behalf. Consequently, at the time of Rene's demise, which happened ten years after that of his daughter, he was already a penitent Christian, who had in fact made his peace with God.

Eustelle described her mother as an excellent Christian who was 'gentle and patient in all her trials'. As a result of Marie Picotin's marriage to Rene, five children were born of whom Eustelle was the second. The last three children and Eustelle were all raised together; the former outlived the latter. Charles, the youngest, followed in his father's footsteps and worked as a thatcher for several years, but later he desired to become a priest, which he did. Charles maintained that he had felt called to become a priest because of Eustelle's prayers and advice. Eustelle had already been dead for four years at the time of his ordination in Pons.

Eustelle's younger sisters, Marie-Angele and Madeleine-Anastasie were workers who had the rare virtue of humility. Although they were almost as pious as Eustelle, they were never the recipients of extraordinary divine graces. Eustelle was different from her sisters in this respect. Eustelle was amiable, expansive and playful as much as her sisters, especially Anastasie, were quiet and reserved. These two sisters of Eustelle were devout but they were not popularly regarded as saints. It was Eustelle who was widely viewed as the servant of God both during and after her life.

Anastasie and Charles were the last surviving members of the Harpain family, after the deaths of Eustelle, Angele and their mother. Anastasie and Charles, the abbot, were present when their sister Eustelle was posthumously glorified. On that occasion Charles talked about his angelic sister Eustelle; he asked people to read her writings and biography. The pious were also shown the tabernacle before which Eustelle had prayed.

We know that Eustelle went to school for six years where, among other things, she learnt how to read and write; two years later she had her first communion and confirmation. At the tender age of fifteen she experienced a conversion to God; it was the spiritual change from sinfulness to righteousness. Eustelle started leading a completely new life, although people mocked the girl and heaped scorn on her. Two years later she finished serving her apprenticeship and began doing her duties as a day labourer. In 1834 Eustelle made an unsuccessful attempt to become a nun at the seaport of La Rochelle. At the age of twentytwo, when Eustelle was a young woman, she vowed herself to a life of chastity. The following year she ceased being a day labourer; she also stopped living with her parents. After that time Eustelle, taking God to witness, bound herself by a vow of poverty. In 1839 she was in charge of the sacristy (a room where the sacred vessels and vestments of a church are kept). She recovered from her first major illness in 1840. She was required to write down the story of her life by her spiritual directors. The next year she fell ill again. As a
result of her final illness Eustelle peacefully passed away in June 29th 1842 at the age of twentyeight.

Eustelle's Letter

Reproduced below is a moving letter of Eustelle that was written just four years prior to her demise. Addressed to a clergyman, this telling document testifies to the fact that Eustelle was a very serious person who adored Jesus with great intensity. In it she has touched upon a question that was a major worry for many outstanding Christian mystics. This problem has been termed "aridity"; St Teresa of Avila, for instance, called it "aridity in prayer." Often it was the case that devotional saints started feeling apprehensive whenever they experienced some degree of diminution of their devotion. Over the ages the saints of every kind and clime have struggled, with or without much success, to maintain at its highest peak their devotion to the Supreme Being.

Saintes
December 28 1838

May the cross of Jesus live eternally in your heart!

At the moment my soul is in a sad situation, although it is a little better than before.

God alone, I tell it to you from the bottom of my heart, has been the Knower of the infinite sufferings that I have been bearing for four weeks. Oh, what a terrible trial! Who is the person who can tell me that he has never made a mistake? I shall not go into the details concerning my afflictions, because it seems to me that you would not be able to believe it. I render thanks to the Lord, and I request you to join me in thanking Him for the very special strength that He has given me during this period. If you want to know more about it I will tell it to you in another letter. Meanwhile my confidence and trust in God has not waned. By writing these lines my faith in God gets strengthened. Jesus's sweet love for me enlivens me and encourages me to be more and more devoted to Him. Sir, through your prayers please obtain for me some spark from this Divine Fire, because living without loving God is the worst misery. What are the reasons for my not loving God, I who have been overwhelmed by His graces, I who have been the recipient of His mercy in such abundance? Let us therefore love God Who is so good and so generous; let us love this tender Father Whose hand is led by the heart and Who punishes only because He wants to reward us. I desire God's love not just for me but also for you. Therefore love Him for He is good and lovable. Love Him and work with all your strength so that He may love you. May your soul find rest in Him. May you find solace in Him while facing the sufferings that are part and parcel of your ministry. Pardon me for taking the liberty of conversing with you in this manner. It ill becomes me to say these things but God knows the reason why. I would like to love Him but I am unworthy of the degree of love for God that I long to have. Therefore I hope that others would have that amount of love for Him. I wish you would love God in this way as you are already aware of its charm and sweetness.
Request this Divine Spouse of our souls never to allow me to offend Him. Request Him to grant me the holy virtue of humility. I fear that I am often lacking in humility.

I felt that you have had a lot of work from what you said in your letter ... Have courage; in this I see you conforming more to your Divine Master, He, Who, during His earthly life was devoured by zeal for the glory of His Father and Who only looked for His rest in continuous work by which He brought about our salvation. You have dealings with a good Master Who is going to pay you to the very last farthing. But you know that the motive of a reward should not alone motivate us. Are we not already paid enough by the fact that He finds us worthy to do something for Him? Let us therefore always strive towards perfection. May the interest of His glory be the incentive for our thoughts, words and actions. Let no unworthy cowardliness delay us in making the sacrifices which He has the right to require of us.

I have just finished reading the volumes of Saint Francis of Sales.

The year is ending; with what speed the year has passed! Only graces have been received and maybe I have not made good use of them! Another year will soon begin and the Lord is preparing Himself to grant us His new blessings. May God grant your wishes and help you to walk along the path of saintliness as well as to safeguard your life so that you can obtain His glory for a long time. It is not my wish that you should have the goods of this world; you know how fragile and costly they are. I thank God for the saintly simplicity and disinterestedness that I have found in you. Let us love and practice the dear virtue of poverty. Oh, only riches can be found in this virtue! Let us practice it until our last breath so that we may die in its arms. Because in this way, devoid of worldly things, we may in the celestial homeland fill ourselves with the highest good that is God Himself.

Tell good Mary a lot of things on my behalf. I wish her a better year than the previous one and I hope that God would grant it to her. I wish her all the best as regards her sanctification. May she therefore have more faith and confidence in God, more love, more gratitude for His gifts. Finally, I wish her that which I desire for myself, namely that God lives in her mind and rules in her heart.

Sir, stay at all times in the heart of Jesus. I find you often there. How nice it is in this holy dwelling!

Your respectful sister,

Eustelle

Eustelle was secretive about the graces and extraordinary favours that she was privileged to receive. These she divulged only to her spiritual directors and Sister Anastasie because she made it a matter of conscience. She asked them to be absolutely discreet about it.

One day an inquisitive lady questioned her, “Do you see God? Are you favoured with extraordinary graces? Tell it to me.” Eustelle replied, “What kind of person do you think I am? A poor miserable woman who sees God! What do you think?”
Eustelle gave an evasive answer as she did not want to hurt this lady's feelings.

Eustelle was filled with disgust when others sang her praises as much as she experienced satisfaction when people railed against her. Never enslaved by the vanity of clothes, she wore the simplest of dresses that were always clean. A woman who was indifferent to her appearance, she eschewed jewellery and ornaments. Eustelle was ill at ease with upper class people; she enjoyed the company of the poverty-stricken and those who were as lowly as herself.

While remaining in a motionless bodily posture Eustelle would contemplate God. Love is the result of mystical contemplation and also its cause. The more one contemplates God, the stronger the love for Him. The soul that contemplates is often favoured with visions, inner voices and revelations that are all useful for further contemplation. Such spiritual experiences testify to the existence of supernatural gifts of which the soul is the beneficiary. In the life of Eustelle there were numerous instances of supernatural graces of this kind.

For Eustelle, the receiving of the Eucharist (the holy bread and wine) had a deeper significance than merely remembering the last supper of Jesus with his disciples. Evidently, on a few occasions it was the celebration of the Eucharist.
that precipitated Eustelle's ecstatic visions of Jesus.

In Hindu terms the Eucharist is the prasada, the purified and consecrated food that the devotee consumes and enjoys and introduces into the body, which is a symbolic reminder of the importance of turning in an inward direction for experiencing the bliss of God-realisation.

Once she was sweeping the floor of her little house. While worshipping her Beloved interiorly, Eustelle suddenly found herself in the presence of Jesus whose body was covered in blood. His hands were bound. Jesus engaged her for making amends for the ingratitude of mankind by means of her own gratitude and love. This vision lasted for about ten minutes.

On one occasion Eustelle had just received the divine Eucharist. Next she was in the act of giving thanks reverentially. Quickly and unexpectedly she felt that her soul opened with the result that she was filled with joy. Jesus appeared before her. "My daughter," her Master said, "I want you to occupy yourself in the work of honouring Me by the sacrament of my love. Do this as your only occupation. It is true that many souls are serving Me faithfully. But among them there are few who worship interiorly, which alone can make them true worshippers."

On hearing Jesus's voice within herself, she shouted: "O Lord, you know the depths of my misery. I'm unworthy of such favoured treatment!"

Thereupon her Saviour explained the richness of His mercy: He distributed His gifts on the weakest whenever He found them obedient to His will.

Jesus's remark that one should worship interiorly implies that: first, God is within, not without; second, only those who turn inwards, as all Christians should, are the true worshippers.

Towards the latter part of 1839 Eustelle once again interiorly heard the voice of Jesus: I take delight in your company; I wish that you take delight in Me. I am delighted to be with you. But I insist that your heart should remain perfectly detached.

Let us pause for a few moments and consider the phrase "perfectly detached." There is an unmistakable suggestion that perfect devotion or pure bhakti should be disinterested in the sense that it must have the quality of unselfishness. How many are capable of loving God for His own sake, instead of expecting in return any advantage or reward?

In addition to the foregoing descriptions that are inspiring, Eustelle's own reports below about her visions during the years 1840 and 1841 provide an insight into her spiritual state.

She wrote these accounts for her spiritual directors:

A few days ago when I was hearing the holy Mass I saw... our divine Redeemer humbled before His celestial Father, and offering Himself all over again for the work of our salvation. It seems to me that I still see Him turning towards me tenderly and making me hear His words 'I am thirsty... I am still thirsty'. His look was for my heart a flash of love that made me
understand the love of this God-Man... Jesus is still thirsty... He was thirsty during His earthly life; in the Garden of Gethsemane He was thirsty; in Calvary after so much torment and humiliation He complains of thirst. Ah! I still hear Him in the Eucharist how He complains of thirst and I understand why and for what His divine soul is thirsty. Poor Jesus! Tender and celestial Friend! Thy thirst will only be quenched after centuries. But my divine Master, can I not share it with Thee?... I am also thirsty but my thirst is being brought about by Thee. Yet, far from complaining about the pain that this thirst causes me. I ask Thee earnestly to increase the thirst to such an extent that it makes me die.

The thirst of Jesus probably refers not only to the Master’s eagerness to save souls but also to His agonising death. After the crucifixion Jesus said “I am thirsty” but the killers offered Him not water but vinegar instead! (John 19:28-29). Such was her self-effacement and self-denial that Eustelle identified herself with Jesus.

She wrote:

No sooner had the holy Eucharist been placed on the altar than I saw Jesus nailed to the cross by two beastly hangmen... He was raised between Heaven and Earth; He seemed to be filled with souls who were at His feet, but of which the greatest number were only dead bodies. My eyes were fixed on this divine cross and I requested this friendly Saviour to permit me to sacrifice myself together with Him so that I would not have the pain of seeing Him dying without me.

Once again Eustelle was keen on self-abnegation; she wanted to sacrifice her very life for the sake of Jesus. Nothing was more important for this devotee than immolating herself for Jesus.

Eustelle says:

Last Sunday after having rested within Jesus in holy communion for almost two hours... I prepared to decorate the altar of the Holy Virgin when, passing near the tabernacle, I had the inspiration to go down on my knees again because Jesus was next to me. At this moment I felt completely transformed in Our Lord with the result that I became totally unaware of myself. The adorable humanity of Jesus absorbed my whole being. I was very astonished by this experience, and in my limbs I saw and felt only the limbs of Jesus. Then I remembered the words of the apostle: I am crucified with Jesus: nevertheless I live; yet not I but Jesus lives in me.

Conclusion

Although she is not well-known, Eustelle ranks alongside other great Christian saints in moral and spiritual excellence. Her mystical striving culminated in the identification of her individual will with that of the Divine. In Vedantic terms Eustelle’s separated, conditioned and limited self lost its life as it merged into the infinitely vast, unconditioned and limitless Self that knows neither birth nor death.
The Divine Image

By William Blake

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.
Manuscripts of Sri Bhagavan

We reproduce here the following manuscripts in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan.

1. *Atma Vidya* of Sri Bhagavan in Tamil (pp. 174-175).


3. *Sri Arunachala Mahatmyam* containing the Tamil translation of (2) above, by Sri Bhagavan.


5. *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam* (Five Stanzas to Sri Arunachala), the Tamil rendering by Sri Bhagavan of (4) above.

In all these cases (Sls. 2 to 5 — pp. 176-181) the Sanskrit text appears on the left page and the corresponding Tamil rendering on the facing page.


A translation of the *kirtana* will appear in our next issue.
(சுவைக்குறு,)

* இன்றுமணை

(பலனலிகை)

உம்! பூக்கையம் - சுமல்முறைகூறு -
உம்! பூக்கையம்.

(அடைமலானை)

நிளவியதை இருக்கிறது கூடம் வெட்டத்தை
ும் பலனான வாரதையிட உம் பலனான பக்தச்செல்வாகை

(கருப்பருத்தை) (யறும்)

1. உம் பலனான பக்தச்செல்வாகை உன்னான திருத்தலம்

இளமான பலனான ஆட்சியான "சுமல்முறைகூறு -
 நினைவு சிவனகூறு மூஸ 
 உம் பலனான பக்தச்செல்வாகை" என்றே

சிவனலுக்கு; சிற்றுற்றுறைகென;

சிறுமியும் மாற்றுவோம்.... (யறும்)

2. சிறுமியும் மாற்றுவோம் உம் பலனான பக்தச்செல்வாகை

இல்லை சிவனகூறு வெட்டக் கேட்டு

சிறுமியும் மாற்றுவோம் உம் பலனான பக்தச்செல்வாகை

சிவனலுக்கு; சிற்றுற்றுறைகென;

சிறுமியும் மாற்றுவோம்.... (யறும்)

* பலனான பக்தச்செல்வாகைப் பாகியால் குருதலைக் கற்றால்

(கருப்பருத்தை) (யறும்).

பலனான இருக்கிறது கூடம் வெட்டத்தை.
3. நான் பாசிய கிருட்டினாய் கிருட்டி வரும் நிலையாதனாய்? நான் முடித்திருக்கிறேன் காவலின் பாதுகாப்பு? பொங்கள் எம்பாக்கின்றன பௌத்த விளையாட்டுகளை வெளியிட்டு குறிப்பிட்டு பேச்சுக்களை வேட்டும் நகரம் — பராக்கும்; அதன் விளையாட்டு; கசாரா சுழல்; தியான விளையாட்டு. . . . . . . . (இந்தி!)

4. காண்பா கிருட்டின் நோக்கசோ குண்டு குண்டு கூட்டக்கு விளையாட்டு விளையாட்டு கூட்டக்கு நோக்க விளையாட்டு விளையாட்டு கூட்டக்கு நோக்க விளையாட்டு விளையாட்டு கூட்டக்கு நோக்க விளையாட்டு விளையாட்டு கூட்டக்கு — கசாரா சுழல்; தியான விளையாட்டு; தியான விளையாட்டு; தியான விளையாட்டு. . . . . . . . (இந்தி!)

5. ஒரு இலாம் கிருட்டினர்கள் குறுக்கு கிருட்டினர்கள் குறுக்கு கிருட்டினர்கள் கயத்தோ விளையாட்டுகளை கயத்தோ விளையாட்டுகளை கயத்தோ விளையாட்டுகளை கயத்தோ விளையாட்டுகளை வகையான கூட்டக்கு வகையான கூட்டக்கு வகையான கூட்டக்கு வகையான கூட்டக்கு வகையான கூட்டக்கு — நோக்க விளையாட்டு; அதன் விளையாட்டு; உரைய விளையாட்டு; இறாவ விளையாட்டு. . . . . . . . (இந்தி!)
श्री

// अरुणाचलमाहात्म्यम् //
// मन्दिकेश्वर वाक्यम् //

1. अरुणाचलम् महाक्षोणे तरुणेनु शिरवामणे।
   तदनं ईदंदवं विधि शिवस्य हृदं दयगमम्।

2. तललेखः स्वयंहाभुः पर्वताका रतंगतः।
   अरुणाचल संहानान।।।।।।।।
   "शिव वचनम्"

3. अरुणाचलर्यं सहायका दन्तगृङ्खि स्तिरेन हि।
   तेजोमय मिदं रूपं प्रयाते कोकर्षणात्।

4. अरुणाचलः पुरुषिन्यं वस्त्वनेन सुरुर्चितः।
   "नमाते गुहादिवर्धा व्याह्यत्या श्रेयंसंयुता।"

5. रूपांतु स्वयं कोकेभाः।
   पहुँचे पाप संचययम्।।
   सङ्गीत न बिहाते तामिनः।
   दुःखे तेना नरुणाचालकम्।"

6. नूरणाचल दर्षनं दूरे।
   कृत्वत्क्षोधं स्मरणेनव।
   अस्तु वेदान्त विज्ञानम्।
   नस्तात्त्वं निप्रथ्यासताः।।
1. உள்ளூர் தாவர கைவியங்கள் மூலம் மெடிப்புக் குறிப்பிட்டு போதுகையில் குறிப்பிட்டு போதுள்ளனவை பின்னர் வரும்வகையில் வெப்ப வேளாயிட்டு பெறப்பட்டு வரும் வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு வரும் ஆண்டு வேளாயிட்டு 

2. உள்ளூர் பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய 

3. உள்ளூர் பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய 

4. உள்ளூர் பெருநெறிய பெருநெறிய 

(* குறியீடுகள் விளக்கம்: குறிப்புக் குறிகள்,பொருள்.)*
7. यौजन तन्य माते दस्मिन्
द्वे निवसतां नृणाम्।
दीक्षादिकं विनायस्तु
मतस्य युज्यां समाहया॥

"श्रीअरुणाचलमाहात्म्यम्"
"संपूर्णम्"

श्री
"आरुणाचल"
"परवरतम्"

1. करुणा पूर्ण सुपाहे
कबलिक पनविश्वस्वर किरणार्ववल्ला॥
अरुणाचल परमात्म
लरुणो भवचित कंजसुविकासात॥

2. तन्यारुणाचल सर्वम्
भूला स्थितवा प्रलीन मेत स्वितम्॥
हयह मित्यावत्तत्या
नृव्यस्ते भौस्ते वदलिन्द्र हुदुसं नाम॥
5. மறைந்து கொண்டு மிகுதியான பண்டைய நின்று குறுக்கு மலர்கில்லை நின்றுலகு பார்வை கவள்வு வேளாண்மை செய்தே பெரும் வேலும் செய்யிக்கறை மீட்டின.


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1. அரசின் நுழைவு பாறை எல்லா விதிகளின் படி விளையாடிய முறை நிலையிலிருந்து பரவலான விளையாடி வரும் விளையாடி பாறை விளையாடி.

2. முதலில் பெருமான் புகழ் கொண்டு புகழ்த்திவடைத்திட்டு கிளிரத்தான நடிகை விளையாடி விளையாடவுடன் கிளிரத்தான விளையாடிய கிளிரத்தான விளையாடிய.
3. अहंकरिति कुतुम्या याति
    त्यथाविन्ध्यात: प्रविष्टवा यमकलुप्तिता ॥
    अवगम्यस्यः रूपम्
    शास्यत्तरुणाचारल्यि नदीवालो ॥

4. त्यत्तवा विषयं बाह्यम्
    रूढः प्राणे न रूढः मनसातः चतुर्वम् ॥
    प्रायः प्रह्याति योगी
    दोषिते महुणाचालवयि शहीर्दंते ॥

5. लघुः रितमन सातनाम्
    पश्यन्त्सर्वं तवाकृति तथा सततम् ॥
    भजतेऽऽज्ञये प्रीतया
    सजयत्वरुणाचर्त्व लयि सुवै मनः ॥

    श्रीमदमणि महर्षि
    देशन महुणाचरस्य देवनिः ॥
    पञ्चक मार्यागीती
    रतन्निविद भैपानिष्ठं दशिः ॥ हलां दुक्तानामः ॥

    "श्रीअरुणाचरः पञ्चामूलम्"
    "संपूर्णम्"
3. ஓரக்கரை வரும் வாழ்பாட்டில் தோன்றும்
உயிரியல் இணையங்களை முடிக்க-புகழ்கைகளை
சேர்க்கும் பாதை முடிக்கும் இறைவனும்
பொருள் வரும் புதுக்கை வாழ்த்து.

4. பிறக்கிலிருந்து விளக்கில் சீர்தம்
விசையன்று மீது மீத்துறையும்
பாதுகாப்புக்கு வகை முடிக்கும்
விளைக்கல்லா சான்றி.

5. பாரம்பரிய சோழப் புராணத்தில்
எண்கில் இலக்கத்தில் பண்டைய மன்மொழியை
வளப்புருசாரியால் புரட்சி உரை மூலம் புராணம்
செய்ய தத்துவதும் சிறந்தம்.

6. அதே திருநூலில் அதிக்கான உணர்வு
விளங்கும் குலகத்தில் பார்த்தல்
சோழன் திருநூல்தொன்மை சான்றிக்கும் பார்த்த
முறை வெளிப்படுத்தும் வேளா.

முடிக்கும் விளையாட்டு.
रमणेशुरि विभक्तर चरणे भज सनुज नस्दापिक नरनिकर हरे सुम प्रिय सिख समरपर हुदयमहः हुरे यदेकुनुमः - संघनाते रङ्गमा \\
अनिशापि विनयमदुः ललिते भजसुज नलुमलिसे जवजलुः लकिः वीरभद्रिकिः जनकचन जलेलकिः कलिः गिरिहियर् भणिभूः। \\
 ओर्तिणाथुः लिंकुः लिलुः लिलुः धैन्यनयत्र अरणाकुत कलकमय बलये भजन्तकिः नरणाबिपये नरलहृते कलये स्वगितले - समुपपोः। \\
जननमसी रक्तिनजन विनुते बांकलुः जनकमवि हुदयमहः सनुते परसमुख परवशित पदनिहित लिनते ष्रमविचित्रः - जरवाते। \\
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॥ रमणगुरि विभक्तर चरणे भजसुज॥

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इति,
काव्यकल्पः, गणपति महामुनि॥

(Handwritten note)
Taken on 28-12-1928, Jayanthi Day.


Taken on 1-12-1947.


Sanatsujatiya

Sanatsujatiya contains the teachings of Sanatsujata, one of the four sons begotten by the power of thought of Brahma, the Creator of the universe. It is also called the Dhritarashtra-Sanatkumara Samvada. This episode deals with jnana (knowledge).

The blind and aged king Dhritarashtra was beset with fear as the clouds of war were gathering on the horizon. He could not dissuade the Pandavas from fighting for their rights. And his partiality for his own sons, the Kauravas, stood in the way of his forcing them to yield to the Pandavas what was due to them. He spent anxious days and sleepless nights. It then occurred to him to send for his half-brother, the wise Vidura, whose words, he hoped might comfort him. But they failed to remove his fear and anxiety.¹ (The episode begins here).

DHRITARASHTRA said, “Vidura, your words are wonderful. If there is anything more, please tell me. I am eager to know.”

Upon this Vidura said: “I am born of a sudra woman and cannot therefore speak to you about certain matters. I am prohibited from speaking about them.” Still he wished to enlighten Dhritarashtra with the Knowledge of Brahman. So, with the help of his yogic power, he made Sanatsujata appear before them.

After duly honouring the sage, Vidura said: “Bhagavan! Dhritarashtra has some doubts which I cannot clear. Kindly, therefore, speak to him. On hearing your words he will transcend the cause of all misery like gain and loss, love and hatred, old age and death, poison-like pride and delusion, hunger and thirst, fear and fearlessness, unhappiness and inertia, desire and anger, growth and decay.”

¹ (The text proper begins here.)

Chapter I

1. The learned and noble king, Dhritarashtra, wishing to attain the Supreme State, approved of the words spoken by Vidura and, taking Sanatsujata to a secluded place, asked him:

2. “O Sanatkumara! I hear that according to your teaching there is no death. But it is said that the devas (celestial beings) and the asuras (demons) led a life of brahmacharya² with the object of transcending death. Which of these is true?”

Sanatsujata replied:

3. Some believe that one can attain the state of deathlessness by means of

Sanatsujatiya was serialised earlier in The Mountain Path between April 1973 and January 1974 (inclusive).

¹ See The Mountain Path January 1968 issue for “Vidura’s advice to Dhritarashtra”.

² Living with a sage observing celibacy.
religious ceremonies. Others say that there is no death at all. O King! Listen to my words. Do not doubt them.

4. O kshatriya! Seers say (lit. admit) that ignorance (or delusion) and death have existed from the very beginning. I tell you forgetfulness (of our true nature) is death and constant mindfulness, immortality.

5. It is on account of their forgetfulness that the asuras were defeated. The suras (devas) became Brahman by being mindful (of their true nature). Death does not actually devour beings like a tiger, for no one has seen even its shape.

6. Some say that death is not what I say but Yama, the immortal being who dwells in the Self and inheres in Brahman. This god (Yama), they say, rules over his kingdom in the world of the pîrs (manes) and that he is gracious to the good and stern to the wicked.

7. This death comes out of the egos of men in the form of anger, ignorance, and delusion. Following evil ways, as men generally do, under the impulse of the ego (lit. in the wake of the ego), hardly anyone attains union with the Self.

8. Being deluded and under its sway (of death) they again (repeatedly) go there (that is, Yama's world) when they depart from this world. But they come back to this world (when their merits are exhausted). Their senses follow them. Thus they go from death to death.

9. Action produces attachment to the fruits of action. And those who are enamoured (lit. go after them) of it never transcend death. Not knowing how to attain union with Reality, embodied beings work purely for the sake of sense enjoyments.

10. This (working for sense enjoyments) is the delusion of the sense organs which makes one perpetually attached to unreal objects. And one who is overcome by his attachment to unreal objects always thinks of them and is devoted to them.


12. He who discriminates deeply and rejects these transitory pleasures, treating them with contempt and never giving a thought to them, becomes as it were, a slayer of death. A wise man overcomes his desires in this manner.

13. He who submits to his desires perishes along with them. But he who turns his back on them expiates his sins, if any.

14. This inert body is a hell for all beings. Those who are enamoured of it and pamper it are like the blind who walk into places full of pits, thorns, etc.

15. O kshatriya! Not knowing anything else (that is, anything better) one does not learn (what should be learnt). One's life then becomes worthless like a tiger made of straw. Deluded and terrified by anger and greed one experiences death in one's own body.

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3 That is, realized that they were Brahman.
4 The God of Death.
5 The first half of this stanza in the original does not make much sense; the text seems to be imperfect.
6 That is, forgetfulness of our true nature as defined by him.
16. One who knows thus the origin of death and is established in wisdom does not fear death. He annihilates death even as death annihilates one who is in its grip.

Dhritarashtra asked:
17. The Vedas say that the happy, eternal and meritorious worlds gained by sacrifices performed by the twice-born (brahmins) constitute the highest good. How then can an intelligent man abstain from such work?

Sanatsujata replied:
18. Only an ignorant man resorts to them. The Vedas describe the rewards gained from them. A wise man does not care for them. He follows the right path, turning aside from wrong paths.

Dhritarashtra asked:
19. If it is true that the unborn and ancient Being creates all this and enters into it, who compels Him to do so? What is His object? In what way is He imperfect? O wise man! Kindly explain everything fully.

Sanatsujata replied:
20. There is great objection to accepting another agency (besides Brahman). When (the unborn and ancient) Being unites with what is beginningless (maya) beings come into existence perpetually.

21. Or it may be that the Eternal (Lord) creates the universe because of His ability to transform Himself (vikara yoga) which is regarded as His power. The Vedas support this view also.

Dhritarashtra asked:
22. As some persons follow dharma and others what is not dharma, is dharma vanquished by what is not dharma or does dharma vanquish what is not dharma?

Sanatsujata replied:
23. It is well known that even while engaged in activity a wise man transcends both of them (i.e., dharma and adharma, or, good and evil) with his wisdom. It is also known that in regard to others merit is acquired by following dharma and demerit by doing evil.

24. He who does both good and bad deeds reaps their transient rewards in the other world. But the intelligent man expiates his demerit by dharma. You must know that this is the better way.

25. Those brahmins who vie with one another in doing acts of dharma, become, when they die, bright beings in heaven (swarga).

26. But in the case of brahmins who do not vie with one another in doing acts of dharma, their acts become the means of acquiring wisdom. When they leave this world they go to the heaven which is beyond the three worlds (or states — trivishtapa).

27. Those who are well-versed in the Vedas consider the conduct of such a person good, although his relations and others may not esteem him much.

28. A true brahmin (lit. one who is like Indra among brahmins) should live where food and drink are plentiful like water and grass in the rainy season. He should be free from anxiety.

29. As he does not make himself known he may meet with threats and ill-treatment in some places. But he should not do
anything to reveal his greatness. Such a man is truly great, not others.

30. The food offered by one who does not ill-treat the unobtrusive (sage) or rob a brahmin of his belongings, is regarded as pure (lit. acceptable) by the pious.

31. A true (brahmin) should think: “Let me always remain unknown.” When he lives with his relatives he should not take (excessive) interest in anything.

32. Which brahmin can conceive of the inner Self devoid of all attributes, immutable, pure and free from all traces of duality?

33. He who regards the Self as other than what it really is, is a thief who robs himself and commits sin.

34. A (true) brahmin should not be overactive. Nor should he accept gifts. His conduct should be irreproachable and acceptable (to the wise). Although learned he should not display his learning. Such a person is a knower of Brahman, a seer.

35. Those who live by displaying their accomplishments are like dogs which devour their own vomit and thereby do harm to themselves.

36. Those brahmins who are poor materially but rich in Vedic lore are invincible and unshakeable. Know that they are Brahman personified.

37. Even a person who knows how to offer sacrifices to all the gods is not the equal of such a brahmin. To him the gods themselves make offerings.

38. If the serene (brahmin) is honoured, he should not feel flattered. Nor should he be perturbed if he is scorned.

39. When he is honoured he should think thus: “Learned men honour me as it is their nature like the opening and the shutting of the eyes.”

40. When dishonoured he should think thus: “Foolish people who have not studied the scriptures do not know what is right conduct and therefore do not honour one who is worthy of honour.”

41. (The desire for) honour (mana) and serenity (mauna) — lit. silence, i.e., silent quietude — do not go together. The former pertains to this world while the latter relates to the other world.

42. O kshatriya! As material prosperity is based on meritorious acts, it is an obstacle to spiritual well-being which is rarely attained by one who is not truly wise.

43. The wise point out several difficult entrances (to spiritual well-being) — truth, straightforwardness, modesty, sense-control, purity and learning. These six are inimical to delusion and pride.

Chapter II

Dhritarashtra:

1. Who is in a state of (true) Silence?7 What is (true) Silence? O wise sage! Kindly explain the nature of (true) Silence. Does a learned man, O Silent recluse, attain the state of (true) Silence by abstaining from speech? How is Silence to be observed?

7 There is a play upon the words mauna (silence) and muni (a silent recluse) in this stanza which cannot be brought out in translation. The word mauna means abstention from speech as well as the highest beatitude.
Sanatsujata:
2. That which neither speech nor thought can comprehend, is (true) silence. That from which the Vedas and the (world) arose is self-resplendent, O King!

Dhritarashtra:
3. Does a twice-born person (a brahmin) who studies (or chants) the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Sama Veda incur sin when he does sinful acts or does he not?

Sanatsujata:
4. O intelligent man! Neither the Rig Veda nor the Yajur Veda nor the Sama Veda will save him from the result of his sinful acts. I am telling you the truth.

5. The Vedas do not absolve from sins the hypocrite, who commits sinful acts. The Vedas abandon him just as nestlings desert their nests when they grow wings.

Dhritarashtra:
6. O wise sage! If the Vedas have no power to save one who studies them why do the brahmmins always boast of their efficacy?

Sanatsujata:
7. This world, O noble soul, truly consists of special names and forms of That (i.e. Brahman). After reaching this conclusion the Vedas hasten to explain that, nevertheless, It is entirely different from the world.

8. It is for realizing That, that austerities, sacrifices, etc., have been prescribed. By these a wise man acquires merit. After expiating his sins by his merits he becomes enlightened through knowledge.

9. The wise man realizes the Self through Knowledge. When he adopts other means it shows that he desires to enjoy the fruits of his actions. Carrying with him the reward of every act done by him in this world, he goes to the next world and enjoys it there. Afterwards he comes back to this world.

10. The reward of austerities (tapas) practised in this world is enjoyed in the next. The austerities of (true) brahmmins are very efficacious, while those of others are not so.

Dhritarashtra:
11. How can extremely efficacious austerities be made perfect? Please tell me how I should understand this.

Sanatsujata:
12. When austerities are not tainted (by selfish motives) they become perfect. They also become very effective.

13. O kshatriya! All these matters about which you are asking me are rooted in austerities. Those who (truly) know the Vedas attain supreme immortality by virtue of their austerities.

Dhritarashtra:
14. O Sanatsujata! You have told me about pure austerities. Now tell me about impure austerities so that I may know that ancient secret of austerities.

Sanatsujata:
15. O King! Twelve obstacles (to spiritual progress), seven inglorious qualities and twelve good qualities such as knowledge are described in the scriptures and are known to the twice-born.

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* That is, in spite of its appearing as names and forms.
16. Anger, lust, greed, desire for worldly knowledge, cruelty, envy, pride, grief, longing for sense enjoyments, jealousy and contempt for others — these twelve (sic) should always be avoided by a virtuous person.

17. O Indra among kings! Each of these circles round a man waiting for an opportunity to assail him like a hunter stalking game.

18. One who always thinks of sense enjoyments, one who rises by pulling down others, one who regrets a gift made by him, one who is mean, one who has little understanding, one who glories in sense enjoyments, one who hates his wife — these are the persons in whom one finds the seven inglorious qualities.

19. Wisdom, truthfulness, sense-control, scriptural learning, absence of malice, modesty, fortitude, absence of envy, observance of religious ceremonies, gifts, steadfastness, mind control — these are the twelve great beneficial qualities to be cultivated by a brahmin.

20. He who never abandons these twelve good qualities can control the whole world. Those who possess three, two or even one of these will be gradually liberated and attain the state of Silence.

21-23. Self-control lies in opposing the eighteen bad qualities, namely, falsehood, malignity, hankering after sense-enjoyments, ill-will towards everybody, ignorance, discontent, hatred of the world, excessive pride, quarrelsomeness, cruelty, false accusation, talkativeness, vain regret, impatience, fickleness, lack of learning, doing sinful acts and violence. He who is free from these bad qualities is regarded by the wise as a man of self-control.

24. Egotism is composed of these eighteen bad qualities which are opposed to self-control.

25. Renunciation is of six kinds which are all extremely good. The third is difficult, by which one transcends misery and accomplishes everything.

26. Giving away one's son and wealth to a deserving and needy person is the first kind of renunciation. The second is making gifts in the course of religious ceremonies ordained by the Vedas and other scriptures, with a strong sense of dispassion.

27. The third, O Indra among kings, is the renunciation of desires. One who has achieved the six kinds of renunciation is a careful (i.e. mindful) person. Mindfulness consists of eight qualities.

(Note: Only three out of the six kinds of renunciation have been described. The text here seems to be incomplete.)

28-29. The bad qualities mentioned in connection with self-control should be abandoned. The abandonment of bad qualities is brought about by mindfulness which has eight characteristics, namely truthfulness, contemplation (dhyana), samadhi, investigation, dispassion, non-stealing, celibacy (brahmacharya) and non-acceptance (of gifts).

9 The word apramada is the opposite of pramada, which means forgetfulness or inadvertence.

10 Lit. question (chodyam).
30. O Indra among kings! Be a man of truth. The worlds are based on truth. They are the faces of truth. Immortality is based on truth.

31. One should turn away from evil and lead an austere life. This is the conduct ordained by the Lord. Truthfulness is the chief virtue practised by pious men.

32. When austerities are accompanied by the good qualities and are free from the bad qualities mentioned above they are very efficacious and perfect.

33. O Indra among kings! I shall answer your question briefly. Such austerities are pure and overcome sins, birth, old age and death.

34. O Bharata! Happy is the man who becomes free from the (distraction) of the five senses, the (distractions of the) mind and the (hauntings and fears of the) past and future.

**Dhritarashtra:**

35.-36. Some (brahmans) talk highly of the five Vedas including the Puranas among them, some talk of the four Vedas, some of the three Vedas, some of the two Vedas and some of one Veda. Some do not accept the Vedas. Tell me which of these I should regard as the best brahmin?

**Sanatsujata:**

37. O Indra among kings! It was because the one real Veda, the only truth, was not properly understood that several Vedas came into existence. Rare is the person who inheres in Truth.

38. He who knows the Truth is a truly wise man. Gifts, scriptural learning and religious sacrifices are motivated by greed.

39. The desires of those who deviate from truth remain unfulfilled. It is because Truth is not realized that religious ceremonies have been extensively prescribed.

40. A brahmin who studies much is to be regarded merely as a man of many words. Only he who does not deviate from Truth is to be regarded as a true brahmin.

41. O Best of men! The Vedas are themselves the authority in these matters. Therefore wise men (aryas) who have studied the Vedas follow them (literally). They do not know what is to be known (i.e., Truth or Brahman).

(Note: This and the following two verses are highly alliterative with a play on the words *vid* (to know) and its derivatives *Veda*, *Vedyam* (what is known) and *Vedita* (the knower). The meaning is not explicit.)

42. There is hardly anyone who (truly) knows the Vedas. What is known can neither know itself nor (the real import of) the Vedas. He who knows (the real import of) the Vedas knows also what is known. He who knows only what is known (i.e., the non-Self) does not know the Truth.

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11 Lit. the only virtue
12 That is, they are regarded as the ultimate authority.
13 That is, religious and spiritual matters.
14 That is, their real import.
15 The object or the non-Self, here the intellect.
16 The non-Self.
43. He who truly knows the Vedas knows also what is known.  
But neither the Vedas nor those who merely study them truly know Him (Brahman). Still, the brahmans who have studied the Vedas try to know their import with the help of the Vedas themselves.

44. Just as a branch of a tree is useful for pointing out the crescent moon, so also the Vedas are considered to be indirectly useful for realizing the eternal and Supreme Self which is the goal of life.

45. I know that a person who is clever and can expound (the Vedas) is called a brahmin. But only he who knows the Supreme Brahman is a (true) brahmin.

46. This (Brahman) should never be sought for in what is not the Self. It is not to be looked for even in the Vedas. Only then does one see Him, the Lord.

47. One should silently meditate on Brahman, absolutely free from desires. Brahman will then reveal Itself to him and he will become the all-comprehensive (Brahman).

48. One becomes a muni (i.e. a silent recluse) by virtue of one's silent quietude, not merely by living in the forest. He who knows the Imperishable (Brahman) is the best of munis.

49. One who brings out (vyakarana) all the meanings (of words) is called a grammarian (vaiyakarana). Bringing out (or manifesting) is really the work of Brahman. But it is also, as a matter of courtesy, attributed to a grammarian.

(Note: Here too there is an alliteration. There is a play in this stanza on the words vyakarana (grammar) and vaiyakarana (grammarian) which cannot be brought out in translation. The meaning is not explicit.)

50. One who can clearly see all the worlds is a seer of all (sarvadarsi). But the wise man who inheres in Brahman, the Reality, is a knower of all (sarvavid).

51. O kshatriya! Even one who has acquired only (the qualifications such as) wisdom, realizes Brahman. So also one who follows the method laid down in the Vedas. This is what I say, O King!

Chapter III

Dhritrarashtra:

1. O Sanatsujata ! What you have said about Brahman is very important and comprehensive (visvarupa). Please therefore tell me also about the other transcendental matters which are rarely spoken about.

Sanatsujata:

2. O King! This Brahman you are urging me to speak about cannot be realized by one who is impatient. The Wisdom which arises when the intellect is completely quiescent and the mind entirely free from thoughts is attained by living

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17 The objective world.
18 That is, the body or the senses or the external world.
19 That is, has acquired the power of seeing the various worlds like Bhuh, Bhuvah, etc.
20 See stanza 19.
21 That is, hearing, reflecting and practising.
with a realized sage and observing celibacy (brahmacharya).  

3. You are talking about the primal and true wisdom which is attained by the virtuous through brahmacharya. On attaining it one turns away from the world of men. This wisdom is generally found in those who have learnt it from gurus.

Dhritarashtra:

4. O wise man! Please tell me what is that brahmacharya through which this wisdom is properly acquired.

Sanatsujata:

5. Those who go to the Acharya (guru or teacher) and are accepted by him as his disciples, practise brahmacharya and become authors of scriptural works (sastrikara). And when they leave their bodies they attain the Supreme Being.

6. They conquer their desires and wait patiently to realize Brahman. They clearly understand that the Self is not the body and detach it just as one extracts the pith of the ishika reed from its outer layers.

7. Father and mother bring only this body into existence. The birth which one takes from the Acharya is the true and immortal birth.

8. He (the guru) protects (the disciple) and makes him immortal. The disciple should not, therefore, knowingly transgress against him. He should salute the guru daily. He should be eager to learn from him and be always attentive.

9. The learning acquired by following the conduct prescribed for disciples is pure (beneficial). This is said to be the first quarter of brahmacharya (course of study).

10. The disciple should conduct himself towards the Acharya's wife and children exactly as he would towards the Acharya. This is the second quarter.

11. He should always remember what the Acharya has done for him, recognize its value, feel that he has been fortunate in having him for his Acharya and be grateful to him. This is the third quarter of brahmacharya.

12. He should please the Acharya with his body, mind and speech, giving up even his life and property, if necessary. This is the fourth quarter.

13. One quarter is gained by coming to the guru, another by intelligent perseverance, a third by studying the scriptures and a fourth in course of time.

14. The twelve good qualities such as wisdom and the other requisites (see II—19, 21-28) and strength (of mind) yield results only when one comes into contact with the Acharya. Brahmacharya becomes fruitful when one realizes union with Brahman.

15-16. The devas attained their celestial status through brahmacharya. The sages (rishis) became eminent through brahmacharya. The apsaras living with the gandharvas became beautiful through brahmacharya. The Sun illumines the world by virtue of brahmacharya.

22 This word ordinarily refers to celibacy or the life of a celibate student. But here it is used in the wider sense of practising the discipline necessary for realizing Brahman, that is living with a realized person and following his advice.

23 Those who go to him and are accepted by him as his disciples (sishya).

24 That is, to realize that they are Brahman.

25 Celestial nymphs.
17. Just as one attains one’s desires with the help of the wish-fulfilling gem (chintamani), so also they attained their present status by first realizing the value of brahmacharya.

18. But they attained only worlds which are finite, not the Self, which is infinite. The wise attain that Eternal Effulgence through wisdom. There is no other way of attaining it.

Dhritarashtra:

19. A brahmin of spiritual attainments sees within himself the colours white, red, black, silvery and bluish. Which of these is the colour of the immortal and imperishable Supreme Being?

Sanatsujata:

20. It is neither white nor red, nor black nor silvery nor bluish. It is not found on earth nor in the sky, nor is it found in the waters of the ocean.

21–22. It is not found in the stars or the lightning or the clouds or the air or the gods governing the sense organs or the sun or the moon or the Rig Veda or the Yajur Veda or the holy Sama Veda or the rathantara or the brahadratha. It is realized within oneself by him who practises great austerities.

23. It is not possible to transcend It. It is beyond darkness (ignorance). Everything finally enters into It at the time of destruction (of the worlds). It is tinier than the tiniest and bigger than the mountains.

24. Everything shines in Its effulgence. The Knower of the Self perceives It by the yoga of Knowledge (jnana yoga). The entire world is based on It. Those who realize this become immortal.

Chapter IV

(Several stanzas in this chapter are cryptic as well as allegorical, reminding one of the Vedic hymns. The meaning is not always explicit.)

Sanatsujata:

1. That which is immaculate, a great radiant effulgence, supremely glorious, is meditated upon by the devas and makes the sun shine. Yognis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord (Bhagavan).

2. Brahman (the Creator) emerges out of that Immaculate Being and flourishes by its power. That Immaculate Being shines in the midst of other shining ones. It is not illumined by anything but is self-luminous. Yoginis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

3. From the Whole emergers the whole. Therefore it is said that what comes out of the Whole is the whole. The whole is taken away from the Whole. Still the Whole remains whole. Yoginis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

4. Like space and sky and ripples in the Ganga, everything, moving and unmoving rises from Brahman and merges in It. Yoginis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

5. (The subtle form of) water emerged first from Brahman. From it arose this

26 Devas and others.
27 The word used is vidvan (a learned man).
28 Kinds of hymns of the Sama Veda.
29 That is, one who possesses the virtues already described (in Chapter II).
30 This last sentence is found at the end of almost all the stanzas of this chapter like a refrain.
31 Lit. grows.
body composed of (the five elements). Within the space in the middle of it\textsuperscript{32} dwell the two shining ones\textsuperscript{33}. Facing each other and enclosing all the directions of space these two support the earth and heaven. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

6. Horses carry to heaven the bright, divine and immortal being seated on the chariot of the Immutable Being whose deeds do not perish. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

7. There is nothing\textsuperscript{34} which can be compared to It. None can see it with the eyes. Those who realise it with the mind, the intellect and the heart become immortal. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

8. The moving assemblages of twelve\textsuperscript{35} drink the honey under the protection of the shining one and, repeatedly hankering after it, wander about in terrible places. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

9. The bee drinks in the course of half a month, the honey gathered (during the previous half month). The Lord bestows upon all beings the sacrificial offerings\textsuperscript{36} due to them. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

10. The fledglings resort to the peepul tree with leaves of gold. There they grow into birds and fly about as they like. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

11. The outgoing vital air (\textit{prana}) absorbs the ingoing air (\textit{apana}). The Moon absorbs the upcoming air. The Sun absorbs the Moon. The Supreme Being absorbs the Sun. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

12. The swan does not, while flying, raise one leg out of the water. If it were to keep it raised always, there will be neither death nor immortality. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

13. The indwelling person, small as a thumb, always wanders about (in \textit{samsara}) on account of his association with the subtle body (\textit{linga}). Ignorant persons do not perceive that shining and adorable primal being who pervades everything. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

14. Just as serpents, after killing men with their poison, hide themselves in caves, so also the sense organs, after beguiling foolish persons with pleasures, delude them and keep them (perpetually) in \textit{samsara}. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

15. A foolish person does not realise the Self in himself and therefore flounders about in the well of \textit{samsara}. He who ignores the Self and enjoys sense pleasures is truly an ass. \textit{Yogis} clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

16. This (the Self) is seen to exist in those who possess the spiritual qualifications as well as those who do not. It is the same in the state of Liberation and the other state (i.e., the state of bondage). Yet only those

\textsuperscript{32} The body.

\textsuperscript{33} The individual self and the Supreme Self.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Lit. no form (rupam)}.

\textsuperscript{35} Our bodies composed of the five organs of knowledge, the five organs of action, the mind and the intellect.

\textsuperscript{36} The fruit of their action.
who are one with it enjoy Supreme Bliss. Yogis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

17. One who knows (Brahman) gains both the worlds. Even if such a person does not perform the fire ceremony (agnihotra) he gets the benefit of it. Do not treat the knowledge of Brahman as unimportant. The wise attain that State which is called Absolute Awareness. Yogis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

18. The great Self described above, the Person (purusha), swallows the fire. He who knows that person does not lose his Self. Yogis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

19. Therefore one should always inhere in the Self. There is no death for such a person, so where is the question of immortality? Truth and untruth alike depend upon the one Reality. The origin of truth and untruth is one and the same. Yogis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

20. The indwelling person who is as small as a thumb and abides in the heart is not perceived. He is unborn but moves about tirelessly, day and night. When one knows Him one becomes an enlightened seer.

21.-22. Vayu (the air) emerges from It and merges in It. Agni and Soma rise from It. Also Prana. That is the basis (of all), that is Immortality and the worlds. That is Brahman. That is Glory. All beings rise from It and merge in It.

23. The Bright Being supports the two shining ones, the earth and heaven, the directions of space and the world. The quarters and rivers flow from It. The great oceans are controlled by It.

24. Even if one possessed thousands of wings and flew as fast as the mind one cannot come to the end of that Primal Being. Yogis clearly perceive Him, the Eternal Lord.

25. It cannot be perceived (by all). Those who are extremely pure in mind perceive It. The wise man who is free (from likes and dislikes) perceives It clearly. Those who know It become immortal.

26. He who sees himself in all beings and is one with them everywhere, why should he grieve?

27. Just as one has no use for a reservoir when there is a big flood everywhere, so also a brahmin who knows Brahman (Reality) has nothing to gain from others.

28. I am your father and mother and am likewise your son. I am the Self of all that exists or has ceased to exist.

29. O Bharata! I am the old grandfather as well as the father and the son. You are all in me. But you do not belong to me, nor do I belong to you.

30. The Self is my abode. It is also my origin. I penetrate everything through and through. I never grow old. I am the support (of all). I am unborn but am nevertheless active day and night. He who knows me becomes an enlightened seer.

31. I am tinier than the tiniest, the pure mind dwelling in all beings and the father of all — the wise realise me in the lotus (that is, the heart).

37 Lit. his Self does not perish.
38 The Lord and the individual.
Saint Benedict’s Monastic Path to the Divine

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

ST. BENEDICT of Nursia (480-547), the founder of the Benedictine Order is respectfully regarded as the ‘Father of Western Monasticism’. The Benedictine way of life is a harmonious blend of intellectual and manual work. While treating learning with due deference, they value physical work. The dictum Ora et Labora (“Pray and Work”) is frequently attributed to the Rule of Benedict.

"Not only on account of his numerous miracles was St. Benedict a shining light to the world," observed Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604), "but also by reason of his precepts and his teachings. He wrote a rule for monks which is distinguished for its wonderful discretion and clearness of thought."

Born in the Italian town of Nursia (Umbria) in 480, Benedict was sent by his parents to school in Rome but he fled the city in disgust owing to its immoral life. The people there were not self-disciplined. He moved from place to place until he discovered a cave where he decided to live in secrecy. His whereabouts were known only to one friend, a monk called Romanus from a neighbouring monastery, who not only clothed Benedict in the monastic habit but also provided him with food. As befits a hermit, Benedict lived austere in the cave, devoting his time to solitary prayer and contemplation. At all times God was his invisible Companion.

Benedict became well known and the monks of a nearby monastery persuaded him to become their abbot. He accepted the position. But when Benedict expressed his opposition to their immoral lifestyles and tried to stop their bad conduct, the monks attempted to poison him. Thereupon Benedict returned to his cave and his disciples followed.

After returning to Subiaco, Benedict was responsible for establishing twelve monasteries in various places which were all under his general control and direction. As his work was held in high repute Roman patricians and senators entrusted their sons to Benedict who trained them as monks. Unfortunately he had to leave Subiaco because of the jealous hostility of a priest. Undaunted by such setbacks and accompanied by a few monks, Benedict travelled southward to Cassino where he founded a famous monastery on a high mountain overlooking the town. There

he preached and converted many pagans to Christianity.

There is a dearth of information about Benedict's life. We are indebted to Edward van Speybrouck for the following lines relating to the end of the saint's earthly existence: "St. Benedict, the great Patriarch of the Western monks, died March 21, 547, on the Saturday preceding Passion Sunday. His edifying and victorious death was indeed suited to so great a champion of Christ. In his last hour, he assumed a standing position and thus manifested the power and authority his soul had attained over his body; even to the last moment, while a burning fever was consuming his life and strength, he held himself erect. He died in the church, in that sanctified place where daily with his brethren he had sung the praises of the Triune God and assisted in the celebration of the Sacred Mystery, the life-giving Sacrifice of the Mass. Even to this day, his sacred remains are resting beside those of his sister, St. Scholastica in the church of St. John the Baptist at Monte Cassino. In the course of years, numberless miracles have glorified his tomb. Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604) mentions that at his time, miracles were wrought through the intercession of St. Benedict whenever the petitioner was penetrated with lively faith."

St. Benedict's extensive influence in the Christian world is traceable to the famous 73 chapters in The Rule of Saint Benedict whereby he regulated monastic life. The fact that his rules have remained unaltered for fourteen centuries is a tribute to their intrinsic excellence. He did not prescribe annoying austerities. The monks were permitted to have the bare necessities of life such as proper clothes, sufficient food and adequate sleep. However they were required to fast till midday. Field work for them is what he had in mind, but monks must do whatever work is most useful.

Although the abbot is vested with the power to govern the monastery with unquestioned authority, he is nevertheless required to consult the whole community on important issues. Even the youngest should be given a fair hearing. On less important matters the abbot must seek the advice of the elder monks. But in all questions the decisions rest absolutely with the abbot and everyone is required to acquiesce in his judgements. What restrains him from abusing this seemingly arbitrary management power is his eventual answerability to God.

Chapter 53 of The Rule of St. Benedict is about the welcoming of guests, which is one of the first duties of monks. All guests should be received as though they were Christ himself, who would say: I was a stranger and you made me welcome. Guests must be honoured, especially the pilgrims and those who share our faith. After a guest has been announced, the superior and the brothers ought to meet him with the courtesy that is born of love. Initially, they should pray together and thus remain in peace with one another. When poor people and pilgrims arrive, they all

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he preached and converted many pagans to Christianity.

There is a dearth of information about Benedict’s life. We are indebted to Edward van Speybrouck for the following lines relating to the end of the saint’s earthly existence: “St. Benedict, the great Patriarch of the Western monks, died March 21, 547, on the Saturday preceding Passion Sunday. His edifying and victorious death was indeed suited to so great a champion of Christ. In his last hour, he assumed a standing position and thus manifested the power and authority his soul had attained over his body; even to the last moment, while a burning fever was consuming his life and strength, he held himself erect. He died in the church, in that sanctified place where daily with his brethren he had sung the praises of the Triune God and assisted in the celebration of the Sacred Mystery, the life-giving Sacrifice of the Mass. Even to this day, his sacred remains are resting beside those of his sister, St. Scholastica in the church of St. John the Baptist at Monte Cassino. In the course of years, numberless miracles have glorified his tomb. Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604) mentions that at his time, miracles were wrought through the intercession of St. Benedict whenever the petitioner was penetrated with lively faith.”

St. Benedict’s extensive influence in the Christian world is traceable to the famous 73 chapters in The Rule of Saint Benedict whereby he regulated monastic life. The fact that his rules have remained unaltered for fourteen centuries is a tribute to their intrinsic excellence. He did not prescribe annoying austerities. The monks were permitted to have the bare necessities of life such as proper clothes, sufficient food and adequate sleep. However they were required to fast till midday. Field work for them is what he had in mind, but monks must do whatever work is most useful.

Although the abbot is vested with the power to govern the monastery with unquestioned authority, he is nevertheless required to consult the whole community on important issues. Even the youngest should be given a fair hearing. On less important matters the abbot must seek the advice of the elder monks. But in all questions the decisions rest absolutely with the abbot and everyone is required to acquiesce in his judgements. What restrains him from abusing this seemingly arbitrary management power is his eventual answerability to God.

Chapter 53 of The Rule of St. Benedict is about the welcoming of guests, which is one of the first duties of monks. All guests should be received as though they were Christ himself, who would say: I was a stranger and you made me welcome. Guests must be honoured, especially the pilgrims and those who share our faith. After a guest has been announced, the superior and the brothers ought to meet him with the courtesy that is born of love. Initially, they should pray together and thus remain in peace with one another. When poor people and pilgrims arrive, they all

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clothes and the like; loving simplicity and poverty; regarding oneself as an unworthy bad servant in all our tasks;

7. Having a low self-image and viewing oneself as lower than even the worst sinners;

8. Avoiding all love of uniqueness in words or deeds;

9. Loving the practice of silence and actually doing it;

10. Avoiding immoral amusement and loud laughter;

11. Neither speaking loudly nor using words without restraint;

12. Practising humility in all our exterior deeds, by keeping the eyes cast down.

We return to the theme of humility when considering Chapter 29 which deals with the question whether brothers who have left the monastery should be readmitted. When monks who have given up the monastery because of their own faults, later wish to return, they must promise full reparation for having gone away. Then they are received back in the lowest place so that their humility is put to the test. When monks are humiliatingly relegated to the lowest status, their egos would be deeply hurt. No harm will come to them because the existence of even an iota of pride leads to the downfall of any spiritual aspirant.

St. Benedict explained that monks fall into four main categories. The first are the Cenobites. These monks live together with other monks in monasteries, observing specific rules under the guidance of an abbot. The second kind of monks are the Anchorites or Hermits. Because they had once associated with other monks in monasteries where they had learned the art of fighting the Devil, they know how to live in solitude. On account of the Almighty’s help and their own inner strength, they have the ability to overcome the temptations of both body and mind. Had St. Benedict been alive he would probably have likened the sannyasis of India to the Anchorites. The third category of monks are the Sarabaites, who in their actions ‘conform to the standards of the world’; they live in twos or threes or even alone; whatever they think or decide to do, that they term ‘holy’. St. Benedict found them detestable. The last category of monks are the Gyrovagues who spend their days wandering from place to place; they give in to their wills and they eat to excess. In their behaviour they are worse than the Sarabaites. It is significant that St. Benedict sought God’s help to provide for the Cenobites. Benedictines and Cistercians may be described as Cenobites.

One of the reasons why St. Benedict was disgruntled with the Gyrovagues was their vainglorious practice of giving in to their individual wills. The total abandonment of self-will was central to the teachings of St. Benedict. “I have come down from Heaven,” declared Jesus, “not to put into action my will but to put into action the will of Him who sent me”. John 6:38.
deserves to be regarded as a man of God precisely because he allowed the Divine will to eclipse that of his own. When the self disappears, the Self is resplendent.

Whether monks should have any possessions of their own is the subject of Chapter 33. None must give or receive anything without the abbot's permission. Nobody can own anything whatsoever; for monks must not even have their bodies and wills at their own disposal. What they can have are only those things that the abbot has allowed them to keep. In justification of this rule, which ensures a simple and austere life, St. Benedict referred to the Acts⁶ wherein it was stated that all things were common property to these early Christians for they were of one heart and soul. The Bible very clearly suggests the idea that all wealth has to be jointly owned in a perfect world that is based on Christian principles. Presumably in such a millennium, if it ever comes, the distinction between the haves and the have-nots would no longer exist. Besides, what is the point in having any possessions, let alone riches, during our temporary sojourn in this world? Are we permanent residents? Are we not like birds of passage here? As Job remarked in desperation: "Naked did I come from my mother's womb and naked shall I go away".⁷ This particular rule of St. Benedict is a constant reminder of that inevitable last day when we will sadly have to leave behind everything.

There is a long list of religious rules called "The Tools of Good Works" in Chapter 4. These guidelines may seem simple or trivial, but actually they are very important all the same. These are the do's and the don'ts of the spiritual life. St. Benedict was not a theoretician given to metaphysical speculation, but a down-to-earth teacher whose practical instructions have to be strictly followed for spiritual advancement:

- In the first instance, love the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength.
- Then love your neighbour as yourself.
- Do not kill.
- Do not commit adultery.
- Do not steal.
- Do not be covetous.
- Do not bear false witness.
- Honour all human beings.
- Don't do to another what you would not have done to yourself.
- For the purpose of following Christ practise self-denial.
- Chastise the body.
- Do not seek a job where there is no need for hard work.
- Love the practice of fasting.
- Give relief to the poor.
- Give clothes to the naked.
- Visit the sick.
- Bury the dead.
- Help people in their afflictions.

⁷ Job. 1:21.
Console the sorrowful.
Eschew mundane behaviour.
Prefer the love of Christ to everything else.
Never give in to anger.
Never bear a grudge.
Have a heart that is devoid of cunning.
Do not pretend to make peace.
Do not give up being charitable.
Do not swear, because by chance you may be stating something you do not mean.
Let both your heart and mouth express the truth.
Do not return evil for evil.
Do not wrong anyone; when others wrong you, endure it patiently.
Love all your enemies.
Do not curse those who curse you: bless them, instead.
For the sake of justice endure persecution.
Never be proud.
Never drink wine excessively or too frequently.
Do not be a glutton.
Avoid being drowsy.
Avoid being lazy.
Do not be a grumbler.
Do not cast aspersions on people.
God is the hope of all.

Ascribe all your good qualities to God and not to yourself.
Acknowledge that you are the author of your own misfortunes and bad traits.
Regard Judgement Day with fear and dread Hell.
Yearn for eternal life.
Never lose sight of death even for a day.
Keep your deeds under constant observation.
Be sure that God observes you wherever you are.
When evil thoughts occur to you, crush them immediately on the rock of Christ and express them to your spiritual father.
Refrain from saying that which is evil and morally corrupt.
Do not be fond of talking much.
Neither use useless words nor say things that cause laughter.
Do not be given to laughing violently.
Be happy when you hear the sacred scriptures.
Pray often.
In your daily prayers confess your past sins to God with repentance.
Reform yourself so that you do not sin again.
Do not yield to carnal desires.
Detest your own will.
In all matters obey the abbot's orders, even if he himself were acting contrary to them.

Do not desire to be called holy before you are really so.

In your daily deeds carry out the commandments.

Be chaste.

Hate none.

Do not be jealous or envious.

Do not be given to disputation.

Purge yourself of vainglory.

Hold the seniors in reverence.

Love the juniors.

Pray for your enemies in the love of Christ.

Before sunset make peace with your opponent.

Never lose hope of receiving divine mercy.

Many indeed were the miracles that St. Benedict performed. What follows are only a few of this saint's wondrous deeds that testify not only to his own extraordinary but also to the much greater unfathomable mystery of the Divine.

When Pope St. Gregory the Great wrote the passages that follow it is significant that he often referred to St. Benedict as a 'man of God':

Pope St. Gregory says:

"One day, as the brethren were building the cells of the cloister, there lay a stone in the midst, which they determined to lift up and put into the building. When two or three were not able to move it, they set more to it, but it remained as immovable as if it had been held by roots to the ground, so that it was easy to conceive that the old enemy [DEVIL] sat upon it, since so many men were not able to lift it. After much labour in vain, they sent for the man of God to help them by his prayers to drive away the enemy; he presently came, and having first prayed, he gave his blessing; when behold, the stone was as easily lifted as if it had no weight at all".

"One day late in the evening, as the venerable Father was at his repast, it happened that one of his monks, the son of a lawyer, held the candle for him; and while the man of God was eating, he, standing in that manner, began by the suggestion of pride to say within himself, 'Who is he whom should wait upon at table, or hold the candle unto with such attendance? Who am I who should serve him?' To whom the man of God, presently turning, checked him sharply, saying, 'Sign thy breast, Brother; what is this you say? Sign thy breast'. Then he forthwith called upon the brethren and willed them to take the candle out of his hand and bade him for that time to leave his attendance and sit down quietly by him. The monk, being asked afterward by the brethren concerning his thoughts at that time, told them how he was puffed up with a spirit of pride and what he spake against the man of God secretly in his own heart. By this it was easily to be perceived that

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nothing could be kept from the knowl-
edge of venerable Benedict, in whose
ears the words of unspoken thoughts
resounded."\(^9\)

"At another time, a certain Goth, poor
in spirit, desiring to lead a religious life,
repaired to the man of God, Benedict,
who most willingly received him. One day
he ordered an axe to be given to him to
cut brambles in a place which he intended
for a garden. This place which the Goth
had undertaken to prepare was over the
lake's side. While the Goth laboured in
cutting up the thick briers, the iron, slip-
ing out of the handle, fell into the lake
in a place so deep that there was no hope
of recovering it. The Goth, having lost
his axe, ran trembling to the monk
Maurus and told him the mischance, con-
fessing his fault penitently, who present-
ly informed Benedict, the servant of God
thereof. Immediately, the man of God
came himself to the lake, took the handle
out of the Goth's hand and cast it into
the lake, when behold, the iron rose up
from the bottom and entered into the
handle as before. Which he there ren-
dered to the Goth, saying, 'Behold! Work
on and be not discomforted.'\(^10\)

"At another time, also in the country
of Campania, began a great famine, and
all people suffered from great scarcity of
food, so that all the wheat in Benedict's
monastery was used, and likewise almost
all the bread, so that only five loaves re-
mained for the brethren's refect. When the venerable Father perceived
them sad, he endeavoured by a mild and
gentle reproach to reprehend their pu-
sillanimity and with fair promises to com-
fort them, saying, 'Why is your soul sad
for want of bread? Today you are in want,
but tomorrow you shall have plenty'. The
next day there were found two hundred
sacks of meal before the monastery gates
by whom God Almighty sent it, as yet no
man knoweth. Which, when the monks
beheld, they gave thanks to God."

In conclusion, the life and the Rule of
St. Benedict demonstrate that, generally
speaking, the supervisory control and
personal direction of an abbot can be a
contributory factor determining the spir-
Itual evolution of many monks. The in-
dividual guidance that monks receive in
monasteries can be helpful. Absolute
self-reliance is difficult for many aspirants.

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\(^9\) The Life of St. Benedict: The Great Patriarch of the Western
Monks, by St. Gregory the Great, p.36.
\(^10\) Ibid., pp.19-20.
\(^11\) Ibid., pp.34-35.
Advice from a Caterpillar
(A Story from Lewis Carroll)

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass have been immensely popular for a century and more. They are now as well known as the traditional Aesop’s Fables and Anderson’s Fairy Tales.

It is a delightful experience for readers in general and children in particular, to go through the Alice stories of Lewis Carroll describing her adventures and confrontation with strange characters or creatures.

However there is also a serious side and an inner meaning to these stories. They contain elements of political and social satire (applicable to the Victorian age) and literary parody. What is more, many of the episodes are of deep metaphysical significance.

In the episode presented here the Caterpillar puts the pointed question ‘Who are you?’ to Alice (more than once). This is a pointer to the core of man, his real personality. Simultaneously the Caterpillar ridicules Alice’s reservations as to her physical size or changes therein. This implies that one’s external physical characteristics are not important. What is important is the reality in man, the Self.

(In the course of her adventures Alice sees a large blue caterpillar, sitting on top of a mushroom, with its arms folded. It was quietly smoking a long hookah.)

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, “I—I hardly know, Sir, just at present— at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”

“What do you mean by that?” said the Caterpillar, sternly. “Explain yourself!”

“I can’t explain myself, I’m afraid, Sir,” said Alice, “because I’m not myself, you see.”

“I don’t see,” said the Caterpillar.

“I’m afraid I can’t put it more clearly,” Alice replied, very politely, “for I can’t understand it myself, to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.”

“It isn’t,” said the Caterpillar.
“Well, perhaps you haven’t found it so yet,” said Alice; “but when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you’ll feel it a little queer, won’t you?”

“Not a bit,” said the Caterpillar.

“Well, perhaps your feelings may be different,” said Alice: “all I know is, it would feel very queer to me.”

“You!” said the Caterpillar contemptuously. “Who are you?”

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation. Alice felt a little irritated at the Caterpillar’s making such very short remarks, and she drew herself up and said, very gravely, “I think you ought to tell me who you are, first.”

“Why?” said the Caterpillar.

Here was another puzzling question; and, as Alice could not think of any good reason, and the Caterpillar seemed to be in a very unpleasant state of mind, she turned away.
“Come back!” the Caterpillar called after her. “I’ve something important to say!”

This sounded promising, certainly. Alice turned and came back again.

“Keep your temper,” said the Caterpillar.

“Is that all?” said Alice, swallowing down her anger as well as she could.

“No,” said the Caterpillar.

Alice thought she might as well wait, as she had nothing else to do, and perhaps after all it might tell her something worth hearing. For some minutes it puffed away without speaking; but at last it unfolded its arms, took the hookah out of its mouth again, and said, “So you think you’re changed, do you?”

“I’m afraid I am, Sir,” said Alice. “I can’t remember things as I used — and I don’t keep the same size for ten minutes together!”

“What size do you want to be?” it [Caterpillar] asked.

“Oh, I’m not particular as to size,” Alice hastily replied, “only one doesn’t like changing so often, you know.”

“I don’t know,” said the Caterpillar.

Alice said nothing: she had never been so much contradicted in all her life before, and she felt that she was losing her temper.

“Are you content now?” said the Caterpillar.

“Well, I should like to be a little larger, Sir, if you wouldn’t mind,” said Alice: “three inches is such a wretched height to be.”

“It is a very good height indeed!” said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing itself upright as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high).

“But I’m not used to it!” pleaded poor Alice in a piteous tone. And she thought to herself “I wish the creatures wouldn’t be so easily offended!”

“You’ll get used to it in time,” said the Caterpillar; and it put the hookah into its mouth, and began smoking again.

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THE PURE-HEARTED MAN

The pure-hearted man fulfils the supreme purpose of life through the instructions of his Guru, even though they may be casually imparted. The worldly-minded man studies and enquires throughout his life, yet remains unenlightened.

A distaste for the objects of sense is liberation; attachment to those objects is bondage. This is wisdom; now act as thou wilt.

Knowledge of the imperishable Essence makes a worldly, active and eloquent man inactive, silent and wise. What wonder that the holy Truth is shunned by those still attached to the pleasures of the world.

— Ashtavakra Gita, XV. 1-5.
Shakespeare's *King Lear* Re-viewed

By Rosalind Christian

*(King Lear, A Summary)*

KING LEAR, a man of great age, intends to divest himself of things worldly and turn his thoughts towards his end. He will retain only his kingly title and a retinue suitable to his position. His kingdom is to be divided between his three daughters, and he asks each in turn the quality of her love for him. The two elder Princesses, Goneril and Regan, speak with most fulsome flattery, but Cordelia, reduced almost to silence, refuses to put into words her love for her father. She is banished, along with the faithful Earl of Kent who speaks up for her. Very soon Lear learns to repent the extreme rashness and petulance of his actions. Goneril and Regan set out to divest the King of every shred of his royal status. After a scene of terrible bitterness Lear walks out into the night.

Here the second plot of the play concerning the Duke of Gloucester and his two sons opens up. Lear's departure, after his quarrel with his daughters, is from Gloucester's castle, and the duke feels impelled to offer him some aid. His plan is betrayed by his bastard son Edmund, whom he has trusted implicitly, and he is blinded by Regan's husband Cornwall. He is saved and rescued from despair by his true son Edgar whom danger has forced to take a strange and repugnant disguise. Cordelia, now Queen of France, lands at Dover to aid her father, but her sisters' forces are victorious. This is Edmund's moment of triumph and he is wooed by both sisters. To make his power more secure he secretly orders the death of Cordelia. But Edmund's triumph is short. His treachery is proved by an unknown warrior who reveals himself as Edgar. Goneril poisons Regan and kills herself. Lear enters carrying Cordelia's body and "dies", says the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, "of grief".

Part I

On the third of March 1887 the Countess Tolstoy wrote in her diary, "Masha is ill and I have been reading *King Lear* to her." (One cannot help feeling sorry for Masha!) "I love Shakespeare but he sometimes does not know where to draw the line — witness all those brutal murders and innumerable deaths."¹ The Countess'

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¹ *The Countess Tolstoy's Diary*, edited by Cathy Porter.
views were mild compared to those of her revered husband. He wrote that Shakespeare had ruined the fine old play of *King Lear*, misguidedly inventing a villain, Edmund, and his 'unlifelike' brother Edgar. He had also taken upon himself to make Lear mad, and, unforgivably, to kill Cordelia. Tolstoy was only one, if the most extreme, of the many critics of *Lear*. Actors found the play difficult too. For many of the actions there seemed to be little motive — so how to interpret the characters? A great actor tells how a depressed cast were cheered by the advice of dramatist-critic Granville Barker. "He told us to think of it as something from the Old Testament or one of the great fairy stories — 'Once upon a time there was an old king with three daughters', 'and it illuminated it all for us.'"

One feels glad to see this view expressed because of the fact that Shakespeare had an intuitive understanding of folktale, and used some of its main themes. The supreme example is the tale of *The Two Brothers* (identical twins) whose story and meaning found its way into the *Comedy of Errors*. The twins are linked with another story, *The Three Brothers* (sometimes triplets) which carries on the idea of linked incarnations moving towards meaning in the three paths they follow — *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti margas* — the paths of body, mind and spirit.²

A tripartite pattern stands out clearly in two of Shakespeare's plays, *Cymbeline* and *Lear*. I realised as I read them, in the light of the Maharshi's teachings and of the folktales themselves, that these ideas added a new dimension of meaning to the two plays. I can still remember something of the shock of recognition as I saw old themes recur.

People grumble at all the improbabilities in *Lear*:

1. Why did Lear, obviously a King of high standing, act with such sudden and inexplicable fury? Perhaps there was some cause we don't discern.

2. Why did Cordelia answer him so shortly even sternly? Perhaps 'she' is something more than what we think.

3. Why did the two elder sisters attack the old King — a man close to death anyway — with such instant cruelty? Perhaps 'they' are not wholly what we take them for.

4. Why does Gloucester so easily fall into the trap set by the villainous Edmund? Who are Edmund and Edgar?

Was Lear, then, essentially a struggle between body-mind and Spirit? This surmise receives sudden encouragement from the extraordinary words of Lear to his eldest daughter Goneril. From the moment he takes his abode with her she assiduously undermines his status and after only two weeks are gone demands the dismissal of half his retinue. Lear angry and bitter sets off to find his second daughter. Thither also goes Goneril to be greeted by Lear's bitterest words:

² *An Actor in His Time*, by John Gielgud.

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad;
I will not trouble thee, my child;
We'll no more meet, no more see one another;
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,
In my corrupted blood. But I do not chide thee:
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it;

I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
I and my hundred knights.4

"Thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter." We pass this over lightly as it is a figure of speech we all accept. But suppose we were to take it exactly as it stands, what then? Could 'Goneril' stand for Lear's relations with body — body consciousness we might say? In an earlier scene 5 Lear heaps on her a domaine of riches, beauty and fertility. He luxuriates in the description of the lovely land he gives her. It is as though Lear had returned, momentarily, to his youth and looked upon the body with hope, admiration and affection. But all too soon he feels the nips and pricks of her true temper. So, he'll to Regan. Of course his image of Regan is likewise false.

Regan is a less filled out character than Goneril. She is a creature of the most cruel and malicious logic. There are many examples, the most glaring being her remark when her husband has torn out Gloucester's eye:

"One side will mock another; th' other too —"

and her dispatch of the blinded Gloucester:

"Go thrust him out of gates, and let him smell his way to Dover."

It is the togetherness of the two sisters which is so interesting. "Pray you, let us hit together", says Goneril to Regan as soon as they see how Lear has fallen into their power. The sisters ally themselves to strip their father of every shred of his old state. Goneril demands why he should need an hundred knights, ten or even five?

“What need of one?”

This last hammer home of logic, without feeling, or even a sense of decorum, is pure Regan.

Small wonder then that some women commentators look askance at these two she-devils as samples of womanhood! But if we transpose them into aspects of Lear himself they lose that sting. The sisters collude to destroy Lear's self respect and keep him at their mercy. And they feel pretty sure of their man, after all has he not chosen them body-mind, and banished Cordelia, Spirit? More immediately they sense that their hour of triumph has come, because, outside the castle walls, in a wild and lonely wilderness, a titanic storm is beginning to rage. No one but a fool would refuse to compromise on such a night as this. But Lear is every inch a king. He makes no compromise for fire, or bed or board, but strides out into the

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4 Act II, scene 4.
5 Act I, scene 1.
night — with only his fool (jester) for company!

This is Lear's finest hour. Divesting himself of any thought of body he calls on the storm to do its worst:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!

You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout...  

He calls on the lightning to singe his white hair and tries to tear off his clothes to feel the full lash of the tempest. In short he throws away all regard for the body as one might throw away a rotten apple.

At last some rough shelter is found for the King, Clown and Kent (now disguised as a servant) and here Lear stages his last act of defiance of the body-mind complex and breaks their power over him for ever. Here he meets Edgar disguised as a Bedlam beggar — a harmless lunatic licensed to beg, but all too often mercilessly persecuted. Here Lear sets up his mock court to try Goneril and Regan, placing the naked and jibbering lunatic, the jester and the servant on the judge's bench together.

Lear to the Fool, "Thou sapient sir, sit here."

Lear to Edgar, "Thou robed man of justice, take thy place."

All the categories of mind, the entrenched power of learning and intellect, are thrown down in this extraordinary scene — a scene of such fantastic imagination as only Shakespeare could have conceived. Kenneth Muir, the editor of the Arden edition of this play sums it up in a well chosen quotation.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek."

"As for happiness", says the Maharshi, "it is our essential nature. All suffering and misery pertain only to the body. If you do not identify yourself with the body then the problem is not there." How calmly this reads and how stormy is the scene when Lear refuses to identify himself with body! But now the battle has been won and the exhausted King falls asleep on a pile of straw, making this charming envoy.

"Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains: so, so.

We'll go to supper i' th' morning."

Now everything happens to Lear. He does nothing. A litter is found and the sleeping King is borne away by night towards Dover where Cordelia has landed to bring him succour. The Self is beginning to exert its stupendous power. Cordelia, like the Princess in folktale, is beginning to draw him to 'Herself'. How does Cordelia look in this role? Her compassion, her quiet, her silence even, would not surprise any of Maharshi's devotees. But what is Lear's attitude to her? This is how he first addresses her:

Now, our joy, Although our last, and least; to whose young love

The vines of France, and milk of Burgundy

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6 Act III, scene 2.
7 Diary of N.N Rajan.
8 Act III, scene 6.
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Strive to be interest’d [linked]; what can you say, to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak. 9

"Nothing, my Lord."
"Nothing?"
"Nothing."

At this the wave of Lear’s fury breaks over the poor Princess. Stripped of her dower, banished his sight, she is rescued by the King of France and departs far, far away, we feel, beyond all recall. But this is not so. By little hints we learn that she is not powerless in the land she has left. It seems she has spies and informers everywhere — a humorous touch this, if we think of Cordelia as Atman or Self. ‘She’ knows full well what will happen to Lear and how it will turn out. Lear takes her words as a total rebuttal. He tells us that he felt torn apart and shaken to the foundations. 10

"He hath but ever slenderly known himself," comments Regan on Lear’s sudden volte face. In this context it means he slenderly knows the power of mind-body. All this might seem highly speculative were it not that exactly the same story had been told far back in the mists of time, by the creator of the stories of The Two Brothers and The Three Brothers. When the Simple Son returns triumphantly home bringing, say, the Golden Princess, or the Bird of Truth, the fruit of his quest, his two elder brothers set out, ostensibly to welcome him, but actually to ambush and kill him. 11 Goneril and Regan lay themselves out to entrap their father and then to kill the spiritual tendency of the King. Why? So that the wheel of re-birth may be kept turning. The ancients knew that the danger point was when the sadhana was nearly Home. The Simple Son in spite of warnings is unable to imagine the resurgent power of body and mind. It is the same with Lear.

9 Act I, scene 1.
10 Act I, scene 4.
This view of Lear takes much of the sting out of the play. It even adds touches of humour. It strikes one, for example, that the protestations of Goneril and Regan of their great love for Lear, are far from false! Goneril declares she loves him "no less than life". Of course she does, both because he is her life and because if she can finally break his link with Spirit, the body-mind complex will take on a new incarnation with some of its latent tendencies carried forward. Body and mind are fighting for their survival.

When we next meet Lear, he is wandering alone picking flowers. His wits have gone, but we must be cautious about 'madness' in Shakespeare. It usually conceals a deeper meaning. Lear has gone beyond body and mind, and he is happy as a child. The child who is part of the Kingdom of Heaven. His reunion with Cordelia is Heaven to Lear. However harsh the world, let us but be together and life is bliss, he says. At this point the theme of the second plot takes over. The dark powers prevail, and Lear and Cordelia are taken prisoners.

Part II

As one reads the play it appears that in Edmund and Edgar we had almost a return to pure myth — the dark brother and the light brother found in several mythologies. 'Brothers' equal linked incarnations, yes, but these two have nothing to do with the identical 'Twins' who work in tandem and achieve immortality: they are their opposites. The implication of such myths seems to be that light and dark are ever in conflict in mankind.

The story of these two 'brothers' is the story of Osiris and Set, part of the myth of Isis — the most perfect myth that we know. Everything is dark about Edmund, who tells us candidly, that he has no thought except for himself. He follows what he sees as nature's own law which resembles the post Darwin view of 'nature red in tooth and claw'. He destroys a kindly father and thereby gains a Duke-dom and cares not a jot for Goneril and Regan who dote on him:

Which of them shall I take?
Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed

If both remain alive.\(^\text{12}\)

If Edmund's aim is absolute power he is supremely endowed to disguise it behind words of sense, protestation of honesty, even diffidence. Evil, Shakespeare is telling us, can look very attractive — at first. Yes, and Edmund has immense pænache. He is not a thin lipped creep but a figure of glamour. We are reminded of the rise of the Nazis to power with their specious promises overlaid by the eye-catching appeal of their public rituals. This is the story of evil unperceived for what it really is. Ordinary man is gullible and thus an easy victim of evil.

Gloucester, who stands between his two sons, is just an ordinary man. He is disquieted by the strange turn of events that lead to the division of Lear's kingdom. As he gradually perceives the dangers that surround his old master, so he slowly exerts himself on the King's behalf. It is

\(^{12}\) Act V, scene 2.
a loyalty which costs him his sight. He is maimed and thrown into a wilderness, just as so many ordinary Germans were thrown into a wilderness of confusion and starvation.

However, we should not regard blinding in a purely physical way — symbolically it suggests the gaze driven inwards. This inward search implies true vision. In no way is King Lear fatalistic. Few plays are so full of choices. The choice that turns the whole course of the play is the choice of a single servant. He cannot stomach more of the cruelty of Cornwall, Regan’s lord. He stabs his master and is himself slain — but the wound he has given is mortal. Now the forces of evil begin to crack from within, as Shakespeare is telling us they are bound to do.

Edgar’s position is the exact opposite of his brother’s. His father’s mind having been poisoned against him and in deadly danger, he is prepared to take his place among the most despised and rejected of mankind. Goodness, Shakespeare is telling us, does not need fame and power; it can work from the ground upwards.

Towards the play’s close Edgar and Edmund meet in a duel — as some mythological ‘brothers’ do. Good triumphs and Edmund sees all his deep laid plans brought to nothing, “The wheel has come full circle. I am here,” he says. Here, is on the ground, bleeding to death. Just as Set and Osiris are at last reconciled, so too Edmund and Edgar. Edmund with his last gasp suffers some recoil from evil. He confesses his order to hang Cordelia.

The ancients understood that man progresses by coil and recoil — like the serpent. Only near the summit of their evolution do the ‘brothers’ move forward with a steady purpose.

The messenger is too late to save the Queen and Lear, with deep lamentations enters carrying her body. This last scene is deeply enigmatic. It has to be, to carry two sets of ideas. It could be said that Lear dies of despair (and many say it) but it could equally be said that he dies of joy at seeing flickers of life in his beloved daughter. Shakespeare refuses to let Cordelia hang herself as in the old tale but he retains this same mode of death. I surmise that hanging, like drowning, has some strange after effects. The individual, if rescued quickly, may recover completely or partially, thus showing signs of life that are wholly positive, or merely spasmodic. Lear’s whole being comes to be concentrated on discerning glimmerings of life. He asks a bystander to help him undo the button of his cloak, perhaps the closer to gaze at Cordelia. While the others present have eyes mainly for the King, Lear has eyes only for her. Edwin Muir discussing Lear’s death notes that the Shakespearean scholar A.C. Bradley had a quite contrary interpretation of Lear’s last moments to the general persuasion. In Lear’s end, Bradley holds, we see agony turned to ecstasy. Let me quote.

“Suddenly with a cry represented in the oldest text by a four times repeated ‘O’ he exclaims:

‘Do you see this? Look on her, her lips
Look there, look there!’"
These are the last words of Lear. He is sure at last that she lives: and what had he said while he was still in doubt?

'She lives! if it be so, 
It is a chance which does redeem all 
sorrows 
That ever I have felt.'

Of course taking the body-mind-spirit group of ideas this has to be our conclusion too. Given the tenor of Lear’s long life, and his struggle with suffering towards its end, Cordelia (Spirit) had to win. Essentially it might be said that Lear dies knowing that Spirit cannot die. The inner drama is complete.

I would like to add that this conclusion is the most true to the spirit of Shakespeare. Not one of his tragedies ends on a note of hopelessness — not even Macbeth which I take to be the darkest. The spiritual status of the great figures of these plays are indicated by the titles, Prince, King and so forth — but each reveals a mistake into which even an advanced soul may fall. Some of these same mistakes can be seen in folktale. Lear, like the Simple Son, is overconfident of his powers to reach ‘Home’ — which is Realization of the Self.

As we have seen, Shakespeare comes in for some hard knocks over Lear — perhaps more recently for the strong attack on sex it contains, and very marked stress on diseases of the flesh. In Act IV sc.6, the ‘mad’ Lear meets the blind Gloucester, and perhaps reminded of Gloucester’s adultery lets rip with a fantastic and hard hitting attack on sex — particularly the hypocrisy of women. All of which is quite inappropriate in this context, say many modern critics. However, Granville-Barker comes to Shakespeare’s defence. Let me quote:

The (superficial) inapposition of this passage is quoted nowadays as evidence of Shakespeare’s morbid occupation with...sex. But it is by no means inapposite to the larger moral scheme of the play. Goneril’s lust has become an important factor in the action. Shakespeare cannot give much space to its development, nor does he care to set the boys acting women to deal directly with such matters. So he uses, I think, the queer intuition of the mad mind as a mirror in which vile-ness is reflected and dilated.

Granville-Barker does well to point towards Goneril and Regan whose sexual passions bring about their mutual destruction. However, the views he expresses fit even better with the body-mind-spirit interpretation of the play — its inner theme as I believe. We are told that sex is the last and strongest bond body-mind exerts to hold the evolving soul to rebirth — and there are strong hints that Shakespeare knew this. Thus Lear’s tirade is not misplaced. It is always noticeable that in Shakespeare the hero rails at what he most fears. Lear has intuitive knowledge of the latent power of sex, especially in his own case. However, the tirade is short and the scene between Lear and Gloucester closes with words of patience and forgiveness. We feel that the ‘mad’ Lear has gone beyond fear. As to the stress on disease, it is central to the body-mind-spirit theme in the play — for it is disease which begins to consume the body and dominate the mind of the very old.
“The body itself is a disease”, says the Maharshi.

Shakespeare needed language richer in words than this to please his Elizabethan audience! A contemporary, probably writing about Shakespeare said, “This poet’s rarity of discretion so prepares his mind that he can bathe in the strains (dregs) of burning lust, fury, malice or despair, and yet be never scalded or endangered by them.”

The idea that the Shakespeare of Lear and Timon was in a distraught state, haunted by sickness and sex, is nonsense. Nobody in that state could give us the balance, subtlety and intricacy of Lear. (And Shakespeare had other duties besides playwright. He was a theatre manager, actor, director and much more!)

The play is on a huge scale, and in spite of the lack of a perfect text we realize that it is wonderfully crafted. What is Lear? Is it the story of an angry king who foolishly puts himself into the power of his ungrateful and evil children? It is both these; and these are set against the backdrop of good and evil as they create and tear apart our frail earthly habitation.

ACHYUTADASA’S VISIT TO SRI BHAGAVAN

By Viswanatha Swami

Achyutadasa was one of the earliest to discern Sri Bhagavan’s spiritual greatness. He was known as Abboy Naidu, before he renounced the world, and was skilled in playing upon the mridangam. He has composed Tamil kirtanas (songs) of great merit, which are devotional and advaitic. Having heard about Sri Bhagavan he went to Gurumoortham, the Samadhi temple of a sadhu, where Sri Bhagavan was living deeply immersed in nirvikalpa samadhi, during the closing years of the last century. He sat in front of Sri Bhagavan and waited.

As Sri Bhagavan who was then a young lad, opened his eyes, he paid his respects to him, massaged his feet and exclaimed with great devotional fervour, “One may be a great scholar, an author or composer and everything else in the world. But it is indeed very rare to come across anyone actually established in the Self Supreme like you.” He then announced to his own disciples that there was “something very rare at Tiruvannamalai”, meaning Sri Bhagavan. Achyutadasa’s samadhi is at Kannamangalam, a few miles north of Arni in the North Arcot district of Madras State.

This is an instance of how spiritually minded people were impressed with Sri Bhagavan’s greatness at the very sight of him even in his early years at Tiruvannamalai.

Add (after children)
Or is it the eternal story of the struggle between body, mind and Spirit as death approaches?
Municharya Panchakam
(The Way of the Recluse)

By Narayana Guru

Narayana Guru composed the following stanzas after a visit to Bhagavan Sri Ramana in 1916, obviously having the Maharshi in mind.

For the hermit whose attachments are gone,
His arm, makes it not for him a pillow?
The earth whereon his footsteps fall
Gaining sin-dispelling power,
Makes it not for him a couch?
For such as he, what use of goods here?
Ever merged as his mind is in the verity of 'That thou art'
His bliss transcends inclusively all forms of joy.

Desireless as he is, for nothing ever asking,
Partaking of food brought to him by chance
The body just to sustain;
From all cares free, sleeping on the thoroughfare,
Ever immersed in the vision of the Self,
The hermit, attaining to the unity of life and Self-supreme,
He comes to his own state, radiant — everlasting —
Of Being-Knowing-joy.

In discourse the recluse excels,
But often restrained in words, he is seen here as one ignorant,
Wandering, sitting, or standing still;

The translation is by John Spiers.
Having once come to this changing body, sanctioned by time,
He ever contemplates the state
Of Selfhood’s uncut Consciousness supreme.
Outside the scope of what is spoken of as existing or non-existing,
As unthinkable, ungraspable, minute, not-short, stainless or supreme,
Immobile, erect, or most exalted,
He seeks to attain that all-fourth (turiya) state
Turning away from both this and that
As one who aims properly
To reach beyond both being and non-being.

Let him live in his own home, or in the forest,
Or at the water’s edge — no matter —
With mind ever fixed in the Absolute
The Yogi ever dwells, seeing all here in terms of Selfhood;
Like a mirage in a desert land.
He enjoys bliss, that Silent One
Contemplating that Absolute supreme which is beyond all compare.
The Practice of the Presence of God

By Brother Lawrence
(Selections from his Letters)

Nicholas Herman of Lorraine, France (1605-91), while yet in his teens, once saw a dry and leafless tree in mid-winter. It was clear to him at once that it would grow to its full stature, with the onset of spring. This signified the power of God. His realisation of this fact was so vivid that it proved a turning point in his life. He embarked on a religious career.

He was admitted a lay brother among the (barefooted) Carmelites in Paris in 1666. Since then he has been known as Brother Lawrence.

Brother Lawrence lived a holy life of communion with God. His main teaching is that one should live in constant awareness of the Presence of God.

The Practice of the Presence of God containing the maxims, conversations and letters of Brother Lawrence, is a valuable guide to seekers.

We present here some selections from the letters, originally published on the recommendation of Cardinal Noailles, Archbishop of Paris.

I

Since you desire so earnestly that I should communicate to you the method by which I arrived at that habitual sense of God’s presence, which our Lord, of His mercy, has been pleased to vouchsafe to me, I must tell you that it is with great difficulty that I am prevailed on by your importunities; and now I do it only upon the terms that you show my letter to nobody. If I knew that you would let it be seen, all the desire that I have for your advancement would not be able to determine me to it. The account I can give you is:

Having found in many books different methods of going to God, and divers practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly God’s. This made me resolve to give the all for the all; so after having given myself wholly to God, that He might take away my sins, I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He, and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world. Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld Him in my heart as my Father, as my God. I worshipped Him the oftenerst that I could, keeping my mind in His holy
presence, and recalling it as often as I found it wandered from Him. I found no small pain in this exercise, and yet I continued it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that occurred, without troubling or disquieting myself when my mind had wandered involuntarily. I made this my business as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times, every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thoughts of God.

Such has been my common practice ever since I entered in religion; and though I have done it very imperfectly, yet I have found great advantages by it. These, I well know, are to be imputed to the mere mercy and goodness of God, because we can do nothing without Him, and I still less than any. But when we are faithful to keep ourselves in His holy presence, and set Him always before us, this not only hinders our offending Him and doing anything that may displease Him, at least wilfully, but it also begets in us a holy freedom, and, if I may so speak, a familiarity with God, wherewith we ask and, that successfully, the graces we stand in need of. In fine, by often repeating these acts, they become habitual, and the presence of God rendered as it were natural to us. Give Him thanks, if you please, with me, for His great goodness toward me, which I can never sufficiently admire, for the many favours He has done to so miserable a sinner as I am. May all things praise Him. Amen.

I am, in our Lord,
Yours, etc.

II

To the Reverend —

Not finding my manner of life in books, although I have no difficulty about it, yet, for greater security, I shall be glad to know your thoughts concerning it.

In a conversation some days since with a person of piety, he told me the spiritual life was a life of grace, which begins with servile fear, which is increased by hope of eternal life, and which is consummated by pure love; that each of these states had its different stages, by which one arrives at last at that blessed consummation.

I have not allowed all these methods. On the contrary, from I know not what instincts, I found they discouraged me. This was the reason why, at my entrance into religion, I took a resolution to give myself up to God, as the best return I could make for His love, and, for the love of Him, to renounce all besides.

For the first year I commonly employed myself during the time set apart for devotion with the thought of death, judgement, heaven, hell, and my sins. Thus I continued some years, applying my mind carefully the rest of the day, and even in the midst of my business, to the presence of God, whom I considered always as with me, often as in me.

At length I came insensibly to do the same thing during my set time of prayer, which caused in me great delight and consolation. This practice produced in me so high an esteem for God that faith alone was capable to satisfy me in that point.
Such was my beginning, and yet I must tell you that for the first ten years I suffered much. The apprehension that I was not devoted to God as I wished to be, my past sins always present to my mind, and the great unmerited favours which God did me, were the matter and source of my sufferings. During this time I fell often, and rose again presently. It seemed to me that all creatures, reason, and God Himself were against me, and faith alone for me. I was troubled sometimes with thoughts that to believe I had received such favours was an effect of my presumption, which pretended to be at once where others arrive with difficulty; at other times, that it was a wilful delusion, and that there was no salvation for me.

When I thought of nothing but to end my days in these troubles (which did not at all diminish the trust I had in God, and which served only to increase my faith), I found myself changed all at once; and my soul, which till that time was in trouble, felt a profound inward peace, as if she were in her centre and place of rest.

Ever since that time I walk before God simply, in faith, with humility and with love, and I apply myself diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease Him. I hope that when I have done what I can, He will do with me what He pleases.

As for what passes in me at present, I cannot express it. I have no pain or difficulty about my state, because I have no will but that of God, which I endeavor to accomplish in all things, and to which I am so resigned that I would not take up a straw from the ground against His order, or from any other motive than purely that of love to Him.

I have quitted all forms of devotion and set prayers but those to which my state obliges me, and I make it my business only to persevere in His holy presence, wherein I keep myself by a simple attention, and a general fond regard to God, which I may call an actual presence of God; or, to speak better, an habitual, silent, and secret conversation of the soul with God, which often causes me joys and raptures inwardly, and sometimes also outwardly, so great that I am forced to use means to moderate them and prevent their appearance to others.

In short, I am assured beyond all doubt that my soul has been with God above these thirty years. I pass over many things that I may not be tedious to you, yet I think it proper to inform you after what manner I consider myself before God, whom I behold as my King.

I consider myself as the most wretched of men, full of sores and corruption, and who has committed all sorts of crimes against his King. Touched with a sensible regret, I confess to Him all my wick edness, I ask His forgiveness, I abandon myself in His hands that He may do what He pleases with me. The King, full of mercy and goodness, very far from chasti ng me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, gives me the key of His treasures; He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly, in a thousand and a thousand ways, and treats me in all respects as His favourite. It is thus I
consider myself from time to time in His holy presence.

My most useful method is this simple attention, and such a general passionate regard to God, to whom I find myself often attached with greater sweetness and delight than that of an infant at the mother's breast; so that, if I dare use the expression, I should choose to call this state the bosom of God, for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there.

If sometimes my thoughts wander from it by necessity or infirmity, I am presently recalled by inward motions so charming and delicious that I am ashamed to mention them. I desire your Reverence to reflect rather upon my great wretchedness, of which you are fully informed, than upon the great favours which God does me, all unworthy and ungrateful as I am.

As for my set hours of prayer, they are only a continuation of the same exercise. Sometimes I consider myself there as a stone before a carver, whereof he is to make a statue; presenting myself thus before God, I desire Him to form His perfect image in my soul, and make me entirely like Himself.

At other times, when I apply myself to prayer, I feel all my spirit and all my soul lift itself up without any care or effort of mine, and it continues as it were suspended and firmly fixed in God, as in its centre and place of rest.

I know that some charge this state with inactivity, delusion, and self-love. I confess that it is a holy inactivity, and would be a happy self-love if the soul in that state were capable of it, because, in effect, while she is in this repose, she cannot be disturbed by such acts as she was formerly accustomed to, and which were then her support, but which would now rather hinder than assist her.

Yet I cannot bear that this should be called delusion, because the soul which thus enjoys God desires herein nothing but Him. If this be delusion in me, it belongs to God to remedy it. Let Him do what He pleases with me: I desire only Him, and to be wholly devoted to Him. You will, however, oblige me in sending me your opinion, to which I always pay a great deference, for I have a singular esteem for your Reverence, and am, in our Lord.

Yours, etc.

III

I have taken this opportunity to communicate to you the sentiments of one of our society, concerning the admirable effects and continual assistances which he receives from the presence of God. Let you and me both profit by them.

You must know his continual care has been, for about forty years past that he has spent in religion, to be always with God, and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing which may displease Him, and this without any other view than purely for the love of Him, and because He deserves infinitely more.

He is now so accustomed to that divine presence that he receives from it continual succors upon all occasions. For
about thirty years his soul has been filled with joys so continual, and sometimes so great, that he is forced to use means to moderate them, and to hinder their appearing outwardly.

If sometimes he is a little too much absent from that divine presence, God presently makes Himself to be felt in his soul to recall him, which often happens when he is most engaged in his outward business. He answers with exact fidelity to these inward drawings, either by an elevation of his heart toward God, or by a meek and fond regard to Him; or by such words as love forms upon these occasions, as, for instance, My God, here I am all devoted to Thee. Lord, make me according to Thy heart. And then it seems to him (as in effect he feels it) that this God of love, satisfied with such few words, reposes again, and rests in the fund and centre of his soul. The experience of these things gives him such an assurance that God is always in the fund or bottom of his soul that it renders him incapable of doubting it upon any account whatever.

Judge by this what content and satisfaction he enjoys while he continually finds in himself so great a treasure. He is no longer in an anxious search after it, but has it open before him, and may take what he pleases of it.

He complains much of our blindness, and cries often that we are to be pitied who content ourselves with so little. God, saith he, has infinite treasure to bestow, and we take up with a little sensible devotion, which passes in a moment. Blind as we are, we hinder God and stop the current of His graces. But when He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours it into His graces and favours plentifully, there they flow like a torrent which, after being forcibly stopped against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage, spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.

Yes, we often stop this torrent by the little value we set upon it. But let us stop it no more; let us enter into ourselves and break down the bank which hinders it. Let us make way for grace; let us redeem the lost time, for perhaps we have but little left. Death follows us close; let us be well prepared for it; for we die but once, and a miscarriage there is irretrievable.

I say again, let us enter into ourselves. The time presses, there is no room for delay; our souls are at stake. I believe you have taken such effectual measures that you will not be surprised. I commend you for it; it is the one thing necessary. We must, nevertheless, always work at it, because not to advance in the spiritual life is to go back. But those who have the gale of the Holy Spirit go forward even in sleep. If the vessel of our soul is still tossed with winds and storms, let us awake the Lord, who reposes in it, and He will quickly calm the sea.

I have taken the liberty to impart to you these good sentiments, that you may compare them with your own. It will serve again to kindle and inflame them, if by misfortune (which God forbid, for it would be indeed a great misfortune) they should be, though never so little, cooled. Let us then both recall our first fervours. Let us profit by the example and the sentiments of this brother, who is little known of the world, but known to God, and extremely caressed by Him. I will pray for