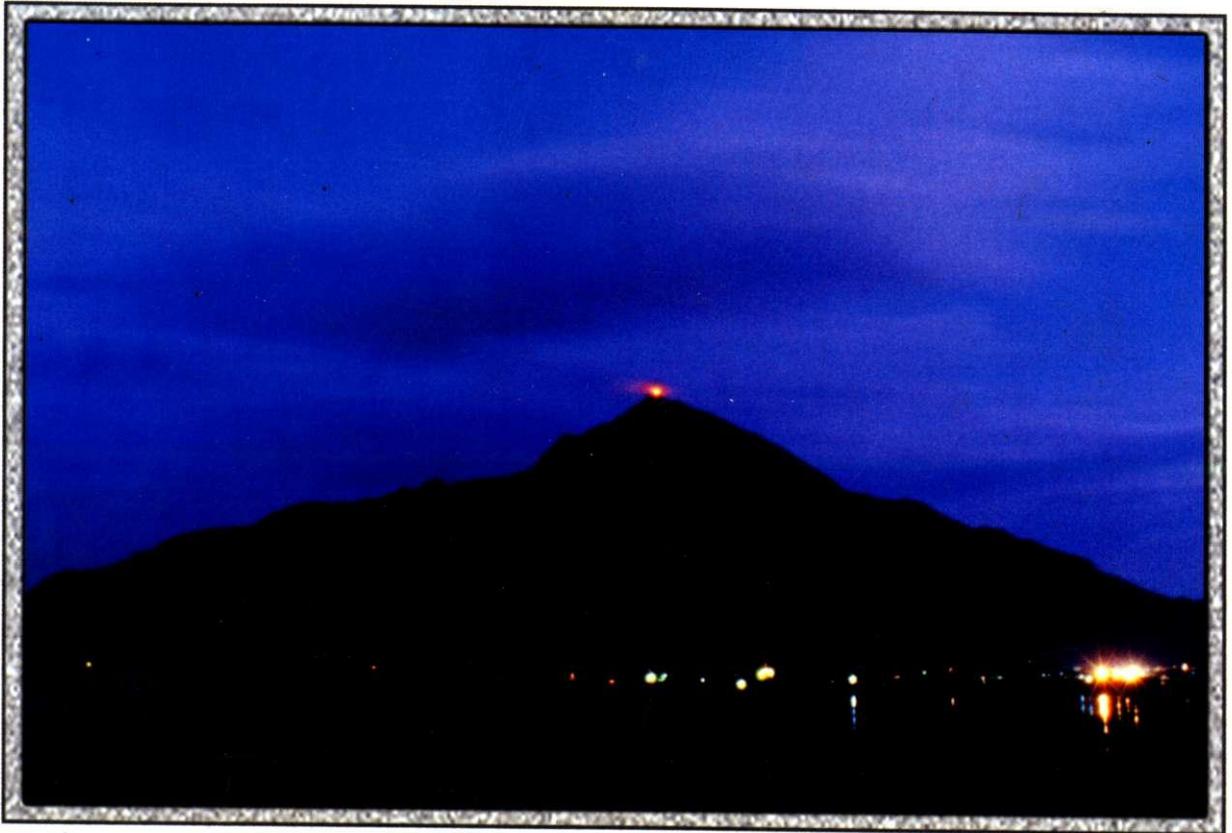


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The  
MOUNTAIN  
PATH

*Jayanti Issue 2000*

# THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

— *The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1*

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— Editor.

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## The Mountain Path

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

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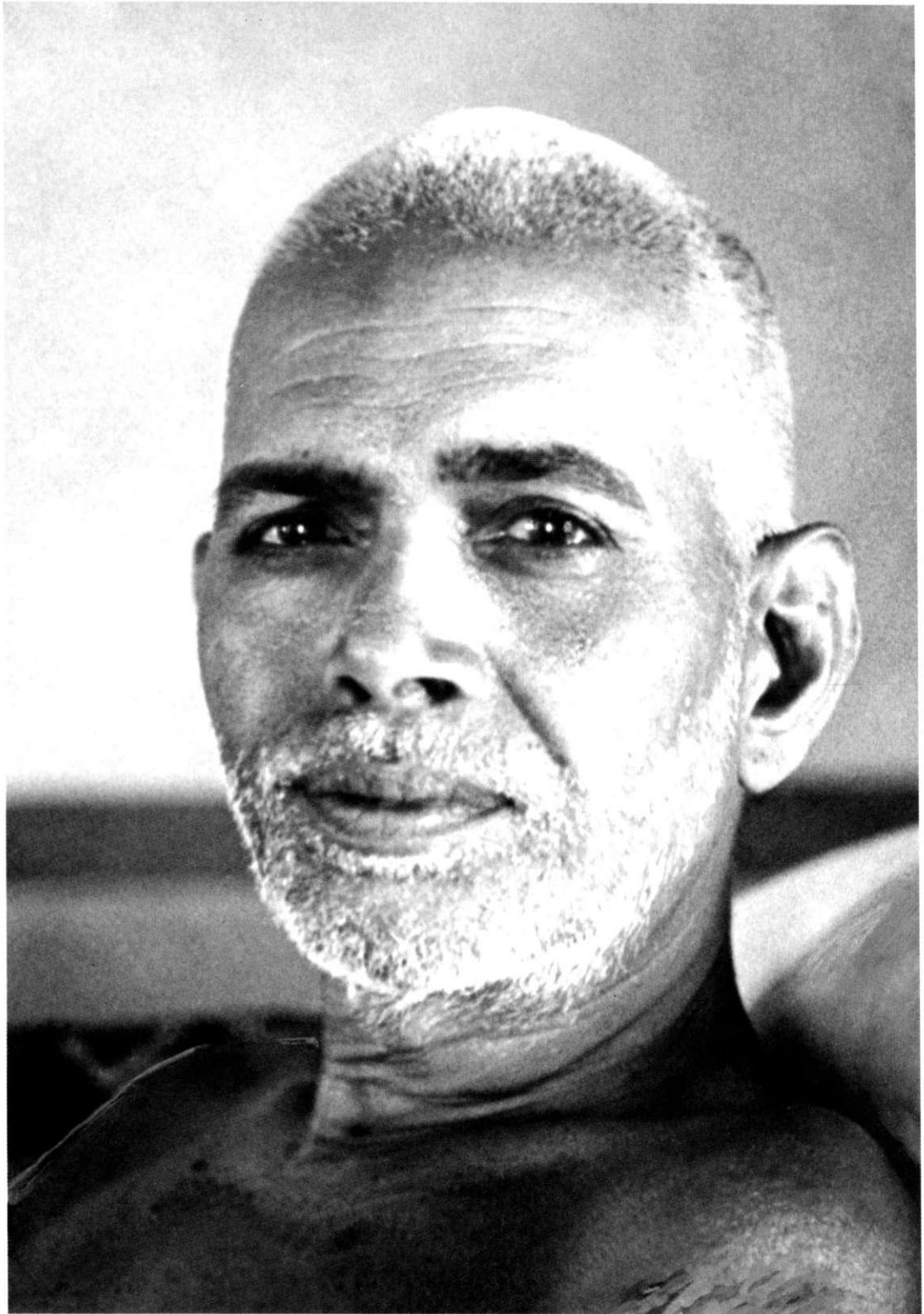
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**The Mountain Path**  
is dedicated to  
**Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**

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EDITORIAL

## The Spirit of *Karma Yoga*

**D**UE to the complexities of modern life we are often driven into a state of unease or tension. This is partly due to the mechanization of even ordinary activities. Mechanization results in minimization of human effort. However this makes us wholly dependent on gadgets and mechanical appliances. Unless they are maintained in conditions of maximum efficiency — free from malfunctioning — confusion results. For instance life is nearly paralysed in the event of a massive failure of electric power.

There is an ever-increasing element of sophistication in machinery. Steam locomotives have almost become relics of the past in most countries of the world. Mechanical typewriters will soon be rendered obsolete. Even milking of cows is done by machines. Dozens of such examples could be given.

The consequence of all this is that in the present times there is less and less of human effort. But one should never forget that human effort and skill in manual work have their own inherent value and are still decisive factors in the essential activities of the world.

There can be no escape from work as such. However it is for the individual to decide to what extent he should involve himself in the activities of the world. It is for him to decide his orientation towards the workaday world.

Generally speaking, the subject of 'work and non-work' (or 'action and non-action') is of perennial interest and has been debated upon from time immemorial by laymen as well as scholars — in some form or other.

In the higher sense, of course, 'work', by implication, means rituals performed as per scriptural injunctions and requirements. No discussion on 'work' can be confined to purely physical or mechanical acts which are part of our daily routine.

All this leads us to a major question regarding the basic Indian thought or attitude to life. More specifically expressed, what exactly is the Indian philosophy of work? Does it imply 'acceptance of life', or its opposite, 'abstention from life'? Some thinkers, mostly western, have taken the view that in Indian thought the stress is on 'other-worldliness'.

According to such thinkers, this essentially Indian temperament was responsible for the industrial and military backwardness of India for long years.

Jawaharlal Nehru has discussed this question in depth.

He says:

. . . Yet some people have thought that Indian thought and culture represent essentially the principle of life negation and not of life affirmation. Both principles are I suppose, present in varying degrees in all the old religions and cultures. But I should have thought that Indian culture, taken as a whole, never emphasized the negation of life, though some of its philosophies did so; it seems to have done so much less than Christianity. . . .

It [Indian thought] could never forget the transcendent element in its make-up; and so, while affirming life to the full, it refused to become a victim and a slave of life. 'Indulge in right action with all your strength and energy' it said, 'but keep above it, and do not worry much about the results of such action'. Thus it brought detachment in life and action, not abstention from them . . . if there is too much attachment to action in the visible world, the other world is forgotten and fades away, and action itself becomes without ultimate purpose.<sup>1</sup>

In Buddhism the emphasis is on asceticism. This is clearly reflected in the daily life of the people in many Asian countries (where Buddhism is practised). Even today we see in such countries the spectacle of a substantial number of people, including

youngsters, taking to a life of mendicancy — begging their food on the street. Such a situation never existed in India. There was no encouragement to the idea of something akin to conscription or mass induction of people into the order of monks. It seems probable that the impracticability of keeping masses of people steadfastly on the path of true asceticism was very much taken into account, in India.

And yet, one should admit that such a thing did happen in India, though for a limited period — when the influence of Buddhism was at its zenith.

Commenting on this, Jawaharlal Nehru says:

Previously, small groups of ascetically inclined people lived in large settlements usually attracting students. With the coming of Buddhism huge monasteries and nunneries grew up everywhere and there was a regular flow of population towards them. The very name of the province of Bihar of today is derived from *vihara* (monastery), which indicates how full that huge area must have been of monasteries.<sup>2</sup>

Every action is followed by a reaction, a result. Performance of *karma* is linked with the question of the fruits or results arising therefrom. So, performing *karma* amounts to perpetuating the cycle of birth and death. We are plunged into *samsara* and experience pleasure and pain alternatively.

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, pp. 82-83 (1988 Edn.).

<sup>2</sup> *Discovery of India*, pp. 176-77 (1988 Edn.).



reason that he desires the fruits of these actions. The Lord is free from egoism and He is pure even when He engages in action. The man who acts with the awareness that the Lord is his own Self will also be similarly free from the idea that he is the agent. Actions will not therefore taint him.

The ancients did not sit quiet but performed action. Therefore one should do likewise. If one is ignorant, then one should perform action to purify oneself. If, on the other hand, one is enlightened, one should still act — for the welfare of society.

One should not succumb to the commonplace idea that action means only movement of the body and that inaction means sitting quiet.

To a man on board a moving ship the trees on the shore appear to move — in the opposite direction. Really, the trees are *not* in motion. Bodies which are far away, whether moving or not, appear to be motionless. In a similar way bodily functions and actions are falsely imputed by all to the Self through ignorance.

One who is endowed with Self-knowledge is always contented. He does not want to secure enjoyments in this birth or the next. He might even give up action but finds it impracticable in view of the necessity to set a good example to others — or perhaps to avoid causing displeasure to the orthodox.

It is necessary to know in detail about the unique status of the *jnani*. We learn from the *Gita* that the poise of the *jnani*, the enlightened one, in the Self is absolute. Whether he chooses to work, or chooses not to do anything, he revels in the Self.

His state is one of total freedom from *karma* and its effects.

The following verses give a clear profile of the transcendental state of such a *jnani*. They are part of a group of fortytwo verses from the *Gita*, selected and arranged by Sri Bhagavan to form a compendium known as the *Gitasara* (Song Celestial).

The Blessed Lord (Sri Krishna) said:

Whose every enterprise is without desire or motive, whose actions are burnt up in the fire of knowledge, him the wise call a sage.<sup>9</sup>

The man who revels here and now in the Self alone, with the Self is satisfied, and in the Self alone is content — for him there is no work which he must do.<sup>10</sup>

For him there is no purpose in doing the work, nor any in leaving it here undone; nor is there for him in all the beings anything which serves a purpose.<sup>11</sup>

Content to take what chance may bring, having transcended the pairs, free from ill-will, and evenminded in success or failure, though he works, he is not bound.<sup>12</sup>

Bhagavan Sri Ramana, in the course of his conversations with devotees on a number of occasions has given clarification

<sup>9</sup> *Gita*, IV.19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, III.17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, III.18. (Nor is there, in all beings from Brahma (Prajapati) down to the *sthavara* or immovable objects, any whose support he has to gain by action — Shankara).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.22.

and guidance on various questions that arise on the subject of *karma*.

The dialogues given below carry his observations.

In his dialogue with Dr. Evans Wentz Maharshi has clarified that work and solitude can go together.

**Dr. E. W.** So then, one might be engaged in work and be free from desire and keep up solitude. Is it so?

**Maharshi.** Yes. Work performed with attachment is a shackle, whereas work performed with detachment does not affect the doer. He is, even while working, in solitude.

**Dr. E. W.** They say that there are many saints in Tibet who remain in solitude and are still very helpful to the world. How can it be?

**Maharshi.** It can be so. Realisation of the Self is the greatest help that can be rendered to humanity. Therefore, the saints are said to be helpful, though they remain in forests. But it should not be forgotten that solitude is not in forests only. It can be had even in towns, in the thick of worldly occupation.<sup>13</sup>

In his dialogue with another devotee, Maharshi explains the need for giving up the sense of doership:

**D.** Is a man to engage in teaching his knowledge, however imperfect?

**M.** If his *prarabdha* be that way.

Arjuna asks if *karma* is a method (*sadhana*). Krishna answers that it is so, if done without the sense of doership.

So also are *karmas* approved by scriptures which deny *karma*. The *karma* disapproved by them is that which is done with the sense of doership. Do not leave *karma*. You cannot do so. Give up the sense of doership. *Karma* will go on automatically. Or, *karma* will drop away from you. If *karma* be your lot according to *prarabdha*, it will surely be done whether you will it or not; if *karma* be not your lot, it will not be done even if you intently engage in it. Janaka, Suka, etc., were also in work without *ahankara*. *Karma* may be done for fame, or may be done unselfishly and for the public good. Yet even then they want applause. So it is really selfish.<sup>14</sup>

The dialogue with Maurice Frydman carries Maharshi's instruction as to how one can free oneself from *karma*.

**M. F.** *Jiva* is said to be bound by *karma*. Is it so?

**M.** Let *karma* enjoy its fruits. As long as you are the doer, so long are you the enjoyer.

**M. F.** How to get released from *karma*?

**Maharshi:** See whose *karma* it is. You will find you are not the doer. Then you will be free. This requires grace of God for which you should pray to Him, worship Him and meditate on Him.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No 20 (20-1-1935).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Talk No 41 (22-9-1936).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Talk No 116 (25-12-1935).

One should not imagine that one is the *karta*. This is the essence of the instruction given to an Andhra devotee.

...

**D.** The *Gita* seems to emphasise *karma*. For, Arjuna is persuaded to fight; Sri Krishna Himself set the example by an active life of great exploits.

**M.** The *Gita* starts by saying that you are not the body, that you are therefore not the *karta*.

**D.** What is the significance?

**M.** That one should act without thinking that oneself is the actor. The actions go on despite his egolessness. The person has come into manifestation for a certain purpose. That purpose will be accomplished whether he considers himself the actor or not.

**D.** What is *karma yoga*? Is it non-attachment to *karma* or its fruit?

**M.** *Karma yoga* is that *yoga* in which the person does not arrogate to himself the function of being the actor. The actions go on automatically.<sup>16</sup>

....

*Nishkama karma* (performing action without any motive or desire) is action at the highest spiritual level which is beneficial to all. The episode from the life of Maharshi presented below is the best illustration that one can give on this subject.

Mr. Rangachari, a Telugu *pandit* in Voorhees' College at Vellore, asked about *nishkama karma*. There was no reply.

After some time Sri Bhagavan went up the hill and a few followed him, including the *pandit*. There was a thorny stick lying on the way which Sri Bhagavan picked up; he sat down and began to work at it leisurely. The thorns were cut off, the knots were made smooth, the whole stick was polished with a rough leaf. The whole operation took about six hours. Everyone was wondering at the fine appearance of the stick made of a spiky material. A shepherd boy put in his appearance on the way as the group made off. He had lost his stick and was at a loss. Sri Bhagavan immediately gave the new one in his hand to the boy and passed on.

The *pandit* said that this was the matter-of-fact answer to his question.<sup>17</sup>

The guiding principle behind action is more important than the action itself. The best concept of work or action is that which takes into account the spiritual needs of man.

Sri Maharshi says:

But acts performed without any attachment in the spirit of service to God, cleanse the mind and point the way to liberation.<sup>18</sup>

This is the spirit in which *karma yoga*, the *yoga* of action, should be practised.

<sup>16</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No 643 (3-3-1939).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Talk No 118 (25-12-1935).

<sup>18</sup> *Upadesa Sara*, Verse 3.

## An Appeal to Sri Bhagavan

By Sadhu Arunachala (Major A.W. Chadwick)

O Bhagavan, I humbly pray  
 Make yourself quickly well!  
 Why leave us in suspense this way?  
 Did you yourself not tell  
 That two or three days ample are  
 To take away all ill?  
 The days drag on, but 'tis our care  
 To see you suffer still.

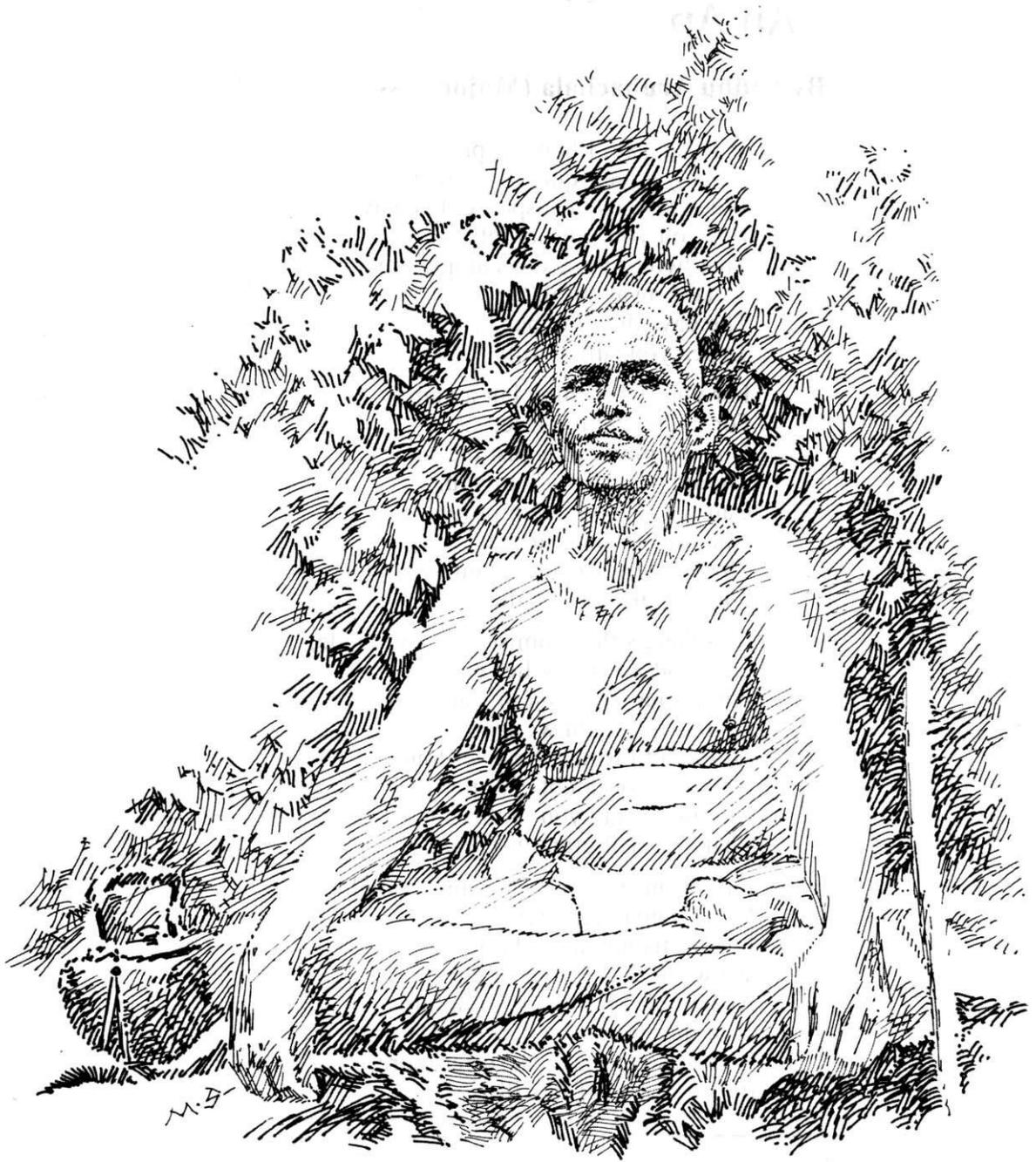
For you 'tis nothing but a game,  
 For us 'tis but too true;  
 Our weeping too is just the same,  
 Though it be naught to you,  
 Can you not pity e'en in fun  
 And understand our fear?  
 This game of sickness you've begun  
 For us makes living drear.

Still there's the promise that you made;  
 Can God Almighty lie?  
 For all our hopes on this are laid,  
 By this our Faith we try.  
 Strain not this test for over long  
 And thus for doubt give place.  
 Humbly I pray you in this song  
 That you will grant us Grace.

Fulfil your promise, stop this game!  
 I now demand as right.  
 For us 'tis not at all the same,  
 We weep to see your plight.  
 As humble children we implore  
 That by an act of will  
 You cease to make us suffer more,  
 By throwing off this ill.

---

These verses were written during Bhagavan's sickness (on January 15th 1943).



## Scenes From Ramana's Life

By B. V. Narasimha Swamy

June 29, 1929

The evening was calm but cloudy. Occasionally it would drizzle and in consequence it was somewhat cool. The windows of the Ashram Hall were closed and Maharshi was seated as usual on the sofa. A number of devotees sat on the floor facing him. Mr. A. S. K., the Sub Judge of Cuddalore, had come to see the Maharshi accompanied by two elderly ladies, his aunt and his cousin. He was also accompanied by Raghupati Sastri, a pleader of Cuddalore. Of the inmates and regular visitors there were about seven or eight, including Sri Niranjanananda Swami (Chinnaswami), Echammal, Ganapathi Bhat, Visvanatha Iyer, Muruganar, and Madhavan.

It was about 6-00 p.m., and the conversation was mainly carried on by the Maharshi and the Cuddalore visitors. Mr. A. S. K. started the discussion as to the impermanence of all mundane things by putting the question, "Has *Sat-Asat-Vicharana* (enquiring into the Real and the Unreal) the efficacy, *per se*, to lead us to the Realization of the One Imperishable?"

**Maharshi:** As propounded by all and realised by all true seekers after the Truth, *Brahma Nishtha* (Abidance in *Brahman*) alone, if one may say so, can make us know and realise It, as being of us and in us. Any

amount of *vivechana* (discrimination) can lead us only one step forward by making us *tyaginah* (renouncers), by goading us to discard the *abhava* (the fleeting), and to hold fast only to the Eternal Truth and Presence.

Then the conversation turned upon the question as to whether *Iswara prasada* (the grace of God) is necessary for the attainment of *samrajyam* (self-rule) or whether an individual's honest and strenuous effort to attain it cannot, of itself, lead us to that from where there is no return. The Maharshi, with an ineffable smile, which affected everyone present, replied:

"*Iswara prasadam* is essential to Realization. It leads to God-realization. But *Iswara prasadam* is vouchsafed only to him who is a true *bhakta* or a *yogin* who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path towards freedom. . ."

Sri Raghupati then proceeded to question the Maharshi about the six *yogic* centres (*adharas*).

**R.** The six *adharas* are mentioned. But the *jiva* (individual soul) is said to reside in the heart. Is that not so?

---

Based on Ms. at the Ashram archives.

This was serialised in these columns earlier between January 1980 and July 1980.

**M.** Yes. The *jiva* is said to remain in the heart in *sushupti* (deep sleep) and in the brain in waking hours. The heart need not be taken to be the fleshy or muscular cavity with four chambers which propels the blood. There are indeed passages which support the idea. The description that it resembles the bud of the lotus, that it is above the navel and between the nipples, that the blood vessels terminate there, appear to confirm that view. There is the stanza in *Forty Verses on Reality*, Supplement, v. 18, to the same effect. But there are many who hold that the term 'heart' denotes a set of ganglia or nerve centres about that region. Whichever view is correct does not matter to us. We are not concerned with anything less than our Self. About that we have certainty within ourselves. No doubts or discussions arise there. The 'heart' is used in the *Vedas* and *sastras* to denote the place whence the notion 'I' springs. Does it spring only from this fleshy ball? It springs from within us, somewhere right in the middle of our being. The 'I' really has no locality. Everything is ourself. There is nothing but That. So the heart must be said to be our entire body and the entire universe conceived as 'I'. But, for the practice of the *abhyasi* (spiritual aspirant) we have to indicate a definite part of the universe, or body, and so this heart is pointed out as the seat of the Self. But, in truth, we are everywhere. We are all that is and there is nothing else.

**R.** The six *adharas*, are they not the seats of the soul?

**M.** Those six are stated to be the seats of the soul for the spiritual aspirant's

contemplation. He should fix his attention on *Muladhara* first, think of the Self as residing there, and gradually go higher up.

**R.** There is a description of each of the six, as the seat of a God, or a figure with a varying number of sides, and with a varying number of faces.

**M.** Yes. These are for purposes of concentration. They are interpreted symbolically.

**R.** There is a difference of opinion between two schools as to the order of the *adharas*. Sir John Woodroffe mentions that some (probably the Nepalese) place the *Anahata* (the heart) next to *Muladhara*, i.e. as the second of the six.

**M.** Yes, there may be variations. But the usual order here is: *Muladhara*, *Swadishtana*, *Manipuraka*, *Anahata*, *Visuddhi*, *Ajna* with *Sahasrara Chakra* on the top of all these six.

**R.** The *Muladhara* is said to be triangular.

**M.** Yes. We may think of the *Muladhara* or Self therein as arising from a three-sided figure.

**R.** The *Kundalini* is said to rise from that.

**M.** Yes. That current is ourselves. By meditating on each *adhara*, the current advances higher and higher and various powers are said to develop.

**R.** It is said that *Iswara prasadam* is necessary to attain successful *samadhi*. Is that so?

**M.** We are *Iswara*. By *Iswara drishti* (seeing ourselves as *Iswara*) we are having

*Iswara prasadam*. So we need *Iswara prasadam* to obtain *Iswara prasadam*.

(Maharshi smiles as he says this and the devotees all laugh.)

**R.** There is *Iswara anugraham* (grace). That is said to be distinct from *Iswara prasadam*.

**M.** The thought of *Iswara* is *Iswara prasadam*. His nature is *arul* or *prasadam*, i.e., Grace. It is by *Iswara's* grace that you think of *Iswara*.

**R.** Is not *Guru anugraham* the result of *Iswara anugraham*?

**M.** Why distinguish between the two? The Guru is viewed as *Iswara* and not as distinct from *Iswara*.

**R.** When an endeavour is made to lead the right life and to concentrate thought on our Self, there is often a downfall and break. What is to be done then?

**M.** It will come all right in the end. There is the steady impulse of your determination that sets you on your feet again after every fall or breakdown. Gradually the obstacles disappear and your current gets stronger. Everything comes right in the end. Steady determination is the thing required.

**July 20, 1929**

Sri N. Natesier, Advocate of Madura, arrived this morning at 7-30 a.m. with his family and paid his respects to the Maharshi. He quoted a verse from the *Bhagavad Gita* and then asked, "How are doubts removed?"

**Maharshi:** By *Granthichchedana* (cutting the knot).

**N. Natesier:** "All *karmas* get destroyed on seeing it." How are we to have that experience? How does this illusion arise and to whom? How is it removed?

**M.** Instead of pursuing these inquiries as to how illusion arises and how it is removed, it is sufficient if we solve first the question 'To whom?' it arises and then all questions are solved.

**N. N.** The doubts arise in my mind and to me. The books say that I must know myself and learn my own nature, but how is this to be done?

**M.** Seek your source. Find out whence the thought 'I' springs.

**N. N.** How is that to be done? I don't find that easy.

**M.** Do we not see things and know them clearly? But what object can we be surer of and know more certainly than our Self? This is direct experience and cannot be further described.

**N. N.** If we cannot see the Self, what is to be done?

**M.** Strenuous endeavour to know the Self is necessary. Develop the *Antarmukam* or introspective attitude. Constantly put before your mind the query "What am I?" and in time you will be able to see your Self. How can you see yourself? You can see that which you have not seen before. But as to what you are always experiencing, there is no *drishti* (vision), strictly speaking. By *drishti*, the removal of the hindrance, viz. the idea that you are not seeing the Self, is meant.

**N. N.** It is said there are *Trimurthis* (three aspects of God) and that Vishnu is in

*Vaikuntalokam* (a heavenly region). Is that a real world, real like this world, or is it only a fiction?

**M.** If you and others and this world are real, why are *Mahavishnu* and *Vaikunta* unreal? So long as you consider this reality, that also is reality.

**N. N.** I am not referring to the *Advaita* state or truth that *Brahman* alone is real and all else is fiction (*mithya*). But I am trying to find out if, in *vyavahara* (empirical) stage, accepting the standards for truth that we have here, *Vaikunta* is true. *Trikalabadhyam Satyam* (true in all three states) is not the standard I take. In *Vyavahara*, this body exists *now* and though it may not be found at other times it is *satyam* or true in one sense. In that sense, is *Vaikunta* true? Does it exist?

**M.** Why not?

**N. N.** Are *Mahavishnu*, *Siva*, etc., then included among *jivakoties*?

**M.** There are *jivas* and *Iswara*. *Jivas* are not the only beings known.

**N. N.** Is there *pralaya* (dissolution) for *Mahavishnu*, etc., and do these *Trimurthis* also meet with their end? Or are they eternal? Do they exist with a body, like this *panchabhautika* (made of the five elements) body of ours? Have they a *vyavaharika satyatvam* (empirical reality)?

**M.** Instead of pursuing the inquiry in that direction, why do you not turn attention to yourself? To whom does the notion of *Vaikunta* and *Vishnu* arise?

**N. N.** Is *Mahavishnu* or *Vaikunta* a mere notion or idea?

**M.** Everything to you is a notion. Nothing appears to you except through the mind, and as its notions.

**N. N.** Then *Vishnu* and *Vaikunta* are creatures of my imagination and pure fiction? They have no more reality than the snake fancied in the rope or *sasa vishanam*, the hare's horn?

**M.** No. When you consider your body and life and other things as real, how can you treat *Mahavishnu* or *Iswara* as unreal? If you are real, he is real, too.

**N. N.** It is not about reality in that sense that I am asking. *Sasa vishanam*, for example, never exists. None has seen it. It is a case of *atyantika abhavam* (absolute non-existence), whereas this body is felt and exists at least as an object of sense experienced for the present. There is a difference between the two sorts of *abhavam*. Can it be said that *Vaikunta* is as unreal as *sasa vishanam*, the hare's horn?

**M.** No. Just as you experience this world and this body and say it is true, there are others who have experienced *Vaikunta*, the *Vishmulokam*, and say that is true. Why call that alone unreal, while you talk of your sense experience as real?

**N. N.** Then *Vaikunta* must exist somewhere. Where is it?

**M.** It is in you.

**N. N.** Then it is only my idea, what I can create and control?

**M.** Everything is like that — your idea.

**N. N.** That is coming back to the *Advaitic* idea. But what I wish to know is, is there a

separate person like ourselves who is *phaladata*, the rewarder of virtue and the punisher of sins?

**M.** Yes.

**N. N.** Has he an end? Does he get dissolved in *pralaya*?

**M.** *Pralaya* is for the soul held by *maya*. If you can, with all your defects and limitations, rise by *jnana* into realization of the Self, and above all *pralaya*, and *samsara*, is it not reasonable to expect that *Iswara*, who is infinitely more intelligent than you, is above and beyond *pralaya*?

**N. N.** I have my doubts yet.

**M.** He who has doubts will go on doubting up to the end of the world.

**N. N.** No. I am anxious to get rid of that doubt and request you to remove my doubts begotten of ignorance. Pray, enlighten me.

**M.** Enlighten yourself by realising your Self.

**N. N.** That I am unable to do. In spite of my desire to shake off all doubts, they cling to me. That is why I seek help. My present doubts about the reality of the existence of other worlds have been long with me. Are *devas* and *pisachas* true?

**M.** Yes.

What follows is a conversation between Maharshi and Bezwada Sundararama Reddi from the Nellore district. It took place on the morning of February 23, 1930.

**Bezwada Sundararama Reddy:** What to do to get *moksha*?

**Maharshi:** Learn what *moksha* is.

**B.S.R.** Should I not leave my wife and family?

**M.** What harm do they do? First find out what you are.

**B.S.R.** Should not one give up wife, home, wealth, etc.?

**M.** Well, first learn what *samsara* is. Is all that *samsara*? Are there not people who live in their midst and get realization?

**B.S.R.** What steps should I take as *sadhana*?

**M.** That depends on your qualifications and stage.

**B.S.R.** I am going on with *vigraharadhana* (worship of a form of God).

**M.** Go on. That leads to *chitta ekagrata* (one-pointedness). Get one-pointed. All will come right. People fancy *moksha* is somewhere and has to be searched for after kicking out *samsara*. *Moksha* is knowing yourself within yourself. Keep on to a single thought. You will progress. Your mind itself is *samsara*.

**B.S.R.** My mind is being too much tossed. What to do?

**M.** Fix yourself to some one thing and try to hold on to it. All will come right.

**B.S.R.** I find concentration difficult.

**M.** Go on practising. Your concentration must come as easy as your breathing. That would be the crown of achievement.

**B.S.R.** *Brahmacharya*, *sattvic ahara*, etc., are all helpful, are they not?

**M.** Yes, all that is good.

(Then Maharshi is silent, gazing at vacancy and setting an example to the questioner for him to imitate and follow immediately.)

**B.S.R.** Do I not require *yoga*?

**M.** What is that but concentration?

**B.S.R.** To help in that, is it not better to have aids?

**M.** Breath regulation, etc., are of much help.

**B.S.R.** Is it not possible to get a sight of God?

**M.** Yes. You see this and that. Why not see God? Only you must know what God is. All are seeing God always. Only they don't realize it. Find out what God is. People see and yet they don't see, because they don't know God.

**B.S.R.** Should I not go on with *kirtan*, *nama japa*, etc., when I worship?

**M.** Yes. *Manasa japa* (mental repetition) is very good. That helps with *dhyana*. The mind gets identified with that *japa* and then you know what real *puja* is — the losing of one's individuality in that which is worshipped or revered.

**B.S.R.** Is *Paramatma* always different from us?

**M.** The difference is the view a man has now. But by thinking of him as not different, you achieve identity.

**B.S.R.** That is *advaita*, is it not? Becoming oneself.

**M.** Where is becoming? The thinker is all the while the same as the Real. He

ultimately realizes that fact. Sometimes we forget our identity, i.e. as waking individual self. In sleep Bhagavan is perpetual consciousness.

**B.S.R.** Is not the *guru's* guidance needed in addition to idol worship?

**M.** How did you start without advice?

**B.S.R.** From *puranas*, etc.

**M.** Yes. Someone tells you, or Bhagavan himself — in which latter case He (God) is your *guru*. What matters it who the *guru* is? We really are one with the *guru* and Bhagavan. The *guru* is really Bhagavan. We discover that in the end. There is no difference between them. "Guru is God" is the idea.

**B.S.R.** If we have some merit the search will not leave us.

**M.** Yes. You will keep your effort that way.

**B.S.R.** Will not a cleverer man be a great help in pointing out the way?

**M.** Yes, but if you go on working with available light you will meet your *guru*, as he will be seeking you himself.

**B.S.R.** Is there a difference between *prapatti* (surrender) and the *yoga* of the *rishis*?

**M.** *Jnana marga* and *bhakti* or *prapatti* advocated by Sri Aurobindo are the same. The goal is the same. Self-surrender leads to it, like enquiry. Complete self-surrender means you have no further thought of 'I'. That is what *bhakti* leads to, and also *jnana*. Then all your *samskaras* are washed off and

you are free. You should not continue as a separate entity at the end of either course.

**B.S.R.** Don't we attain *swarga* (heavenly regions) as a fruit of our actions?

**M.** Why, that is as true as our present existence in this world. But, if we enquire what we are and discover the Self, what need is there to think of *swarga*, etc.?

**B.S.R.** Should I not try to escape from birth and death?

**M.** Yes. Find out who is born, and who has the trouble of existence now. When you are asleep do you think of birth and trouble, etc.? You think of it now. So find out whence this trouble arose and you have the solution. You discover none is born. There is no birth, no trouble, no unhappiness in fact. Everything is That. All is bliss. We are then freed from rebirth in truth. Why feel over misery?

**B.S.R.** Chaitanya and Ramakrishna wept before God and achieved success.

**M.** Yes. They had a powerful *shakti* drawing them through those experiences. Entrust yourself to that power to take you on to your goal. Tears are often referred to as a sign of weakness. We cannot attribute weakness to these great ones. These symptoms are passing manifestations while the great current is carrying them on. Let us look to the end achieved.

**B.S.R.** Can this physical body be made to disappear into nothingness?

**M.** Why this query? Why not find out if you are this body?

**B.S.R.** Can't we appear and disappear like Viswamitra and other *rishis*?

**M.** These are debates about physical matters. Is that our essential object of interest? Are you not the *Atman*? Why think about other matters? Seek the essence. Reject other disquisitions as useless. Those who believe that *moksha* consists in disappearance err. No such thing is needed. You are not the body. What matters it how the body disappears — in one way or another? There is no merit in disappearance of body in one way over the other. Everything is one. Where is superiority or inferiority in the one? See Chap. XIV of *Ramana Gita*. The loss of the 'I' is the central fact — and not of the body. It is the *dehatma buddhi* (the idea that I am the body) that is your bondage. It is the discarding of it and perceiving the Real that matters. Should you pound to pieces something golden before seeing it is gold? What matters if it is round or powdered when you perceive the truth of its being gold? The dying man does not see this body. It is the other man who thinks about the manner in which the body dies. The realized have no death. Whether the body is active or drops off, he is equally conscious and sees no difference. To him nothing is superior to the other. To an outsider also, the manner of disappearance of a *mukta's* body is unimportant. Mind your own realization and after that, it will be time enough to see which form of death is preferable!

Are you the body? During night, when you are fast asleep have you body consciousness?

**B.S.R.** No.

**M.** What exists always, is the 'I'.

## To Sri Ramana Maharshi

By Pascaline Mallet

Before thy Light resplendent  
Gone is the darkness of doubt,  
Thy grace has illumined my being  
And the flame of Eternity burns in my heart.

All hopes, all dreams, all yearnings of the Soul  
Are but whisperings of "That Which Is".  
Before thee, O thou destroyer of ignorance  
The "I-I" flames up and Reality is felt and known.

What matter now what life may bring?  
How to suffer or be happy when the source of both is gained?  
No more shall this great Illusion blind  
The eyes which once have seen.

No death, no fear, no anxious doubts,  
All are phantoms of our mortal minds  
And yet in some mysterious way  
They lead at last to search of Self.

Blind world which does not know  
That life is but a game,  
A shadow of Reality,  
Cast on the stage of Time!

One life, one light, one love,  
Shining through thee we see,  
In the silence of the heart, O! Bliss supreme!  
To know that we are one with thee!

## Arunachala Pancharatnam

By Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan

### Introduction

OF the five hymns to Arunachala composed by Bhagavan Ramana, the present one was originally written in Sanskrit. Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri, the great Sanskrit scholar and devotee, requested Bhagavan one day in 1917 to compose a poem in Sanskrit. Bhagavan replied with a smile that he knew little Sanskrit and less prosody relating to that language. But Kavyakantha was not willing to leave the matter there. He explained to Bhagavan the technique of one of the Sanskrit metres called *arya*, and repeated his request. When he saw Bhagavan again in the evening, the poem was ready in exquisite Sanskrit, expressing in five short verses addressed to Arunachala, the entire teaching of *Vedanta*.

This hymn consists of five gem-like verses on Arunachala; hence the name *Arunachala Pancharatnam*. In the first two verses the nature of Reality is set forth from two levels, *svarupa* (essential) and *tatastha* (*per accidens*). In the remaining three verses the paths to perfection are sketched in outline. Thus, in this short poem, Bhagavan has given us in *sutra* form the

quintessence of *Vedanta*, as also the distinctive points of emphasis that are to be found in his teachings. This poem has been rendered by Bhagavan himself into Tamil *venba*<sup>1</sup> for the benefit of Tamil knowing aspirants. The rendering was done in 1922 in response to a request from a devotee who wanted to add this to four other poems in Tamil on Arunachala written by Bhagavan, and publish the collection under the title *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*.

In the first two verses of the *Arunachala Pancharatnam*, as we have said, the nature of Reality is indicated. The *Upanishads* describe the nature of Reality in two ways:

Reality is existence-consciousness-bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*); its qualification *per accidens* is the causality of the world. The Real in itself is attributeless (*nirguna*) and unconditioned (*nirupadhika*). On account of *maya*, it appears as the cause of the world. In the first verse Bhagavan refers

Reproduced from *The Mountain Path*, January 1973.

<sup>1</sup> Verse form.

to Arunachala, the Supreme Self (*Paramatman*), that is unconditioned and unqualified existence-consciousness-bliss. It is supernal light; it is the ocean of bliss. In it there is no plurality, there is no world. In the second verse Arunachala is described as the world ground, as God who is the source and goal of the universe. Creation, however is not real; it is an illusory appearance. This is the implication of the picture analogy. As Bhagavan himself explained the meaning once to an inmate of Sri Ramanasramam, "The universe is like a painting on a screen — the screen being the Red Hill, Arunachala. That which rises and sinks is made up of what it rises from. The finality of the universe is the God Arunachala".<sup>2</sup> Thus the world is a transfiguration of Arunachala Brahman; it has no reality in itself. For the purpose of meditation on Arunachala, a location is assigned in the body — the location is the "heart", not the physical heart which is in the left side of the chest, but the spiritual heart which is in the right side. Arunachala itself may be referred to as the "Heart", since it is the centre of all things.

In the third verse, Bhagavan teaches the path of Self-inquiry. This is the same as *jnana marga* (the path of knowledge). According to *Advaita Vedanta*, *jnana* is the direct means to *moksha*. *Moksha* is not something to be newly accomplished. It is the eternal nature of the Self. On account of nescience (*avidya*) it remains unrecognised. What will make us recognise it, is the true knowledge of the Self. Bhagavan's formulation of the *jnana marga* is well known. It takes the form of the inquiry 'Who am I?'. Although all can take to this

path, for sure and quick success, one must possess a pure and one-pointed mind. The aids that render the mind fit to pursue the path of inquiry are meditation (*dhyana*), devotion (*bhakti*), and action (*karma*). In the fourth and fifth verses Bhagavan mentions these disciplines. Selfless service (*karma yoga*) removes all impurities from the mind. Devotion to God (*bhakti yoga*) and meditation (*dhyana yoga*) impart to the mind one-pointedness. When the mind turns within and into its source, it merges in that source which is the Supreme Self, Arunachala. This is the final goal of all spiritual disciplines — the plenary experience which is existence-consciousness-bliss.

### Bhagavan Sri Ramana's

### *Arunachala Pancharatnam*

### (A hymn of Five Verses to Arunachala)

#### (1)

*Ocean of Nectar, full of Grace, engulfing the universe in Thy Splendour! Oh Arunachala, the Supreme Itself! Be Thou the Sun and open the lotus of my heart in bliss!*

This is the first verse of Bhagavan Sri Ramana's *Arunachala Pancharatnam*. Here the prayer is for the blossoming of the heart lotus. The heart is compared to the lotus because it is what is fit to be offered to the Lord. The blossoming of the heart can be effected only when the Lord's grace descends on it, even as the lotus opens at dawn when the sun rises. The Lord is the Sun of suns; and it is by His Grace that the heart

<sup>2</sup> Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 442.

of the individual soul should attain maturity and purity.

The Lord is Arunachala, the changeless and constant Light; He is the Supreme Self. He is the ocean of grace and immortality. It is He that destroys all that is evil, and imperfect. To whom but Arunachala will the devotees turn for spiritual illumination that brings in the Life Eternal? It is by the Grace of Arunachala that perfection is gained.

## (2)

*O Arunachala! In Thee the picture of the universe is formed, has its stay and is dissolved; this is the sublime Truth. Thou art the Inner Self, Who dancest in the Heart as 'I'. 'Heart' is Thy name, Oh Lord!*

Arunachala is the Supreme God. A text of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* indicates the nature of Brahman by defining it as that whence all beings come into existence, wherein they reside and whereunto they return. Brahman is the ground of the universe. As the cause of the universe, it is called God. But no theory of creation can be satisfactory. How from the One the many appear is a mystery. Hence, it is said that God is both the material and the efficient cause of the world. The origin, middle, and end of the world are all within God. So Bhagavan Sri Ramana says that in Arunachala all these appear. That this should be so, indeed, is a wonder. It is true that explanations with the help of analogies such as the spider weaving the web out of its own insides, have been offered. But no such explanation is intended to be finally valid. The teaching about the world and its creation is designed only as a prelude

to the realisation of the non-dual Brahman.

The expression *etacchitram* may also be taken to mean 'This is like a picture'. The analogies from art-experience are given in order to show that the world is not to be regarded as a mere fact but as indicative of the highest value which is Brahman. Even as a fact it has its basis in Brahman. Brahman is the canvas whereon the world picture is painted.

The reality of the cosmos is the reality of the individual as well. In the heart it manifests itself as 'I', the Self, It is itself called the 'Heart' because it is the centre of all things. It is said to dance in the heart because it is the principle of delight as well as the dynamism that moves all things.

Arunachala, the unmoving ground of the universe, is the same as Nataraja, the King of Dance who dances in the Hall of the heart-ether (Chidambaram).

## (3)

*He who inquires whence arises the 'I' thought, with a mind that is pure, inward-turned, and realizes his own nature, becomes quiescent, O Arunachala, in Thee, as a river in the ocean.*

Here the path of Self-enquiry is set forth. The technique consists in tracking the 'I' thought to its source. The 'I' thought is the first of all thoughts to arise. Wherefrom does it come? This has to be discovered, naturally, by employing the mind which is itself of the nature of thought. But it is only that mind that is pure and inward-turned that can accomplish this task. When the

mind is impure and outturned, it gets distracted, dissipated, and lost in the objects of sense. It has to turn away from its mad pursuit of the external in order to know the truth and find peace. This it can only do when it is pure. When the pure mind turns within and inquires into the origin of the 'I'-thought, it discovers that this 'I' is the pseudo-self. With this discovery all thoughts disappear, and the true Self alone remains. The ego commits suicide and becomes one with the Self that is Arunachala. This is compared to the river joining the sea and losing itself in it.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* (III, ii, 8) declares :

As the flowing rivers disappear in the ocean, leaving name and form, so the wise one, freed from name and form, goes unto the divine Person, higher than the high.

## (4)

*Rejecting the external objects, with breath and mind controlled, and meditating on Thee within, the Yogi beholds thy light, O Arunachala, and finds his delight in Thee (or, this is Thy glory).*

Here is outlined the way to *yoga* which is the path of meditation (*dhyana*). Usually the mind flows out through the sense organs towards the objects in order to enjoy them. It wrongly imagines that its delight lies in the objects. By dissipating itself away, it only comes to grief. But being under the spell of ignorance, it fails to learn the lesson. When it is disappointed with one object, it jumps on to another. *Yoga* is the return process of the mind; it turns it

inward. Breath control is practised as an aid to mind control. Disciplining the body and regulating the breath help in the taming of the mind. When the mind is made one-pointed and fixed on the Self or God, one finds peace and joy within. Eventually the *yogi* realizes God. God is seen in the form of Light — not the physical light but the pure consciousness or awareness. The Light that is Arunachala is the Supreme Spirit. Its splendour has no parallel; its greatness is unequalled. Seeing this Light is being it. The *yogi's* individuality is dissolved; and there is the Allness alone which is Bliss.

## (5)

*With the mind offered unto Thee, seeing Thee, and seeing all as of Thy form, he who worships Thee with constant love conquers, O Arunachala, being immersed in Thee that art Bliss.*

In the last verse, the path of devotion, and also the way of disinterested work by implication, are set forth. The essence of devotion consists in the total dedication of the individual soul to the service of God. *Bhakti* may begin by offering external things such as flowers and fruits to the Deity; but when it matures, what is offered is the mind, the heart. This the devotee will be able to do only when he sees God everywhere, and everything as an expression of God. He will then serve God in everything, which is the kernel of *karma yoga*. Through such service, the devotee's God-love becomes intense and undivided. And, eventually, he gains victory over all that is finite, inert, and painful; he finds that his individuality has dissolved, and that there is only the limitless sea of Bliss which is Brahman.

## When the Three Great *Alwars* Met

SRI Viswanatha Swami once told me of Sri Bhagavan's love for and knowledge of *Divya Prabandham*, the *Vaishnavite* hymns. He admired the intense love of the *Alwars* not only for the Lord but for one another and used to relate the following thrilling story. Bhagavan used to dramatise vividly the meeting of the *Alwars*, said Sri Viswanatha Swami; even a professional actor could not hold a candle to his fine expressive actions.

(The *Saiva* saints are called *Nayanmars* and the *Vaishnava* saints are called *Alwars*. The first three *Alwars* were Poigai Alwar, Bhutatu Alwar and Pey Alwar.)

The story is as follows:

One evening Poigai Alwar, on his pilgrimage, reached Tirukoilur and took shelter in a very small and narrow room. It became dark and he had just enough space to stretch himself. After some time another man arrived and asked whether he could come in. Poigai Alwar joyously got up and accommodated him, not knowing who he was, saying, 'Space for one to lie down, but enough for two to sit up!' After some time a third man came and wanted some space to stay. The two occupants gladly got up and welcomed him, saying, 'Plenty of space for one to lie down, for two to sit up and for three to stand!'

The three did not know each other, but were exchanging ecstatic descriptions of the Lord. Lord Vishnu had tricked the three saints to meet in this narrow space, in order to bless them and also to partake of their jubilation. So, He created a sudden

dense darkness and very heavy rain. Also, He assumed a huge form and entered that small room. The three saints immediately *felt* the new Presence which caused no physical congestion! But it heightened their jubilation. They wanted to see who it was.

So, Poigai Alwar in his ecstasy sang a song:

With the earth as the vessel, the ocean as oil, the Sun as the flame and my verses as the garland, I offer (*puja*) to the holy feet of the Lord who has the lustrous wheel, in order to get rid of the ocean of my miseries.

Listening to this glorious verse, Bhutatu Alwar, out of joy, composed, for his part another verse:

With love as the vessel, my faith as the oil and the joy-filled mind as the wick, I, who know *Jnana-Tamil*, have lit the lamp of *Jnana* to Lord Narayana.

And lo! they all witnessed the grandeur of Lord Vishnu standing very close to them, filling the dungeon with joy and light!

Pey Alwar was thrilled and sang the following song:

Today I have seen, in my ocean-blue Lord, His golden form, the beautiful colour of the shining Sun, the golden Wheel which wins all battles and the Conch!

The three saints recognised each other and were thrilled to know that it was Lord Vishnu who had made them meet in that place, only to revel in His Name and glory sung by them!

From Chapter 6, *Moments Remembered*: Sri Ramanasramam (1994).



# Genesis of Kavyakantha's Sri Ramana Chatvarimsat

(Forty Verses in Praise of Bhagavan Sri Ramana)

By K. Natesan

*The author, one of the oldest living devotees of Sri Bhagavan, has given us a first person account of his association with Sri Bhagavan and the Ashram in the Aradhana 1998 issue of The Mountain Path. He has been a regular inmate of the Ashram for long years.*

THE contact between Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and his famous *chela*, seer-poet Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni on 18.11.1907 was historic. It has been described in detail by B.V. Narasimha Swami and other writers. On that memorable afternoon of 18th November, in the Virupaksha Cave, Kavyakantha wrote five verses in Sanskrit lauding Maharshi, proclaiming him Ramana and gave the paper containing the verses to the attendant Palaniswamy. As bad luck would have it, these verses have been lost to posterity for ever.

The Muni had the conviction from his earliest years that he was a partial incarnation of Lord Ganesa and so he could easily spot out his younger brother Lord Subrahmanya, whatever might be the disguise in which he might appear! An event of great significance took place at

Pachaiamman temple at the foot of the hill during Maharshi's stay there along with Muni and other disciples for about three months from January to March 1908.

One early morning Muni and other disciples were all sitting before Maharshi, who was as usual indrawn. The Muni saw a sparkling light come down from the skies and touch the forehead of Maharshi six times. Immediately the Muni had the realisation that Maharshi was none other than an incarnation of Lord Subrahmanya.<sup>1</sup> The seer-poet Ganapati Muni gave expression to this realisation through the famous eight verses (*Ramana Ashtakam*) beginning with the words *Yanayatra*.

This was the first composition of Muni on Bhagavan after the five verses written

<sup>1</sup> Lord Subrahmanya is also known as Shanmukha (six-faced).

in Virupaksha Cave on 18.11.1907 which were lost.

Later when Bhagavan was staying on the hill the Muni composed the ten verses beginning with the words *Kathaya nijaya* with a concluding verse for these ten as follows:

*Ganapathy, son of Narasimha born in Vasishtha Kula, praised the glory of his Master in ten verses in Thotaka Metre.*

Again when Maharshi had his abode at Skandasramam, Muni compiled twentyone verses on the glory of Maharshi in two chapters. The first chapter covered the ten verses beginning with the words *Kathaya*. He added three more verses on Bhagavan to the eight verses already composed at Pachaiamman temple. He put these eleven verses in the 2nd chapter and completed the twentyone verses. He composed an *upasamhara sloka* (concluding verse) as follows:

*Ganapati, the son of Narasimha of the lineage of Vasishtha, has thus adored Sri Ramana Guru, who is Skanda, in twentyone verses.*

Besides this Nayana (Bhagavan Maharshi used to call Ganapathy Muni endearingly as Nayana) composed three verses on Bhagavan on different dates when he was living at Skandashram. He composed one verse on Bhagavan on his 44th Jayanti day 3.1.1923, which was the first Jayanti celebrated at the present ashram. So there were twentyfive verses in all on Bhagavan when Nayana left for Sirsi in North Canara District (present Karnataka State) in March 1929.

From there he was writing weekly letters to Bhagavan in Sanskrit from 10th

**Returning is the motion of Tao,  
Weakness is the appliance of Tao.  
All things in the universe come  
from existence,  
And existence from non-existence.  
— Tao Te Ching.**

March 1931 for some months. Along with some of these letters he used to write one or more verses in praise of Bhagavan. He intended to compose in this manner a hundred verses on the glory of Bhagavan Maharshi in different metres consisting of ten *dasakams* (decads) that is, ten verses for each chapter.

Nayana, however, did not compose the intended ten decads in continuous fashion. He was capable of composing one or more verses in a particular metre at one time and in different metres at other times. Finally he used to edit these verses as per his plan. But to our misfortune he did not complete composing the ten decads as planned. He composed only fifteen verses from North Canara. Thus we get forty verses on the glory of Bhagavan, inclusive of the twentyfive verses he composed before he left for Sirsi in March 1929.

When Bhagavan came to know that Nayana intended to compose a hundred verses on him in ten chapters (ten verses per chapter) in different metres, he prepared a note book for writing down these verses. As soon as he got the verse or verses along with some letters, he used to note down

immediately the verse or verses in the note book under the particular chapter as per Nayana's plan.

After the demise of Nayana on 25.7.1936 Bhagavan edited these forty verses for the 1st edition published in 1936.

It may be seen from the manuscript (pp.220-226 of this issue) that Bhagavan has noted on the left the number given by Nayana according to the chapter. On the right side Bhagavan has noted the number of the verse he allotted for his edited version. We see the rearrangement as explained below.

As the 1st decad was complete he retained it as it was (1 to 10). After that he put the 61st verse of the 7th decad as 11 and the 81st verse of the 9th decad as 12. He marked the 10 verses of the 2nd decad as 13 to 22. The 10 verses of the 5th decad were renumbered as 23 to 32. The first verse of the 6th decad was numbered as 33. Verses 34 to 36 were taken from 3rd decad. The 37th verse was the one composed on the Jayanti day, 3.1.1923. The only verse of the 8th decad was numbered as 38. The 2 verses of the 4th decad found a place as the last 2 verses i.e. 39 and 40.

Then Bhagavan also altered the concluding verse (2nd line) of the *Ramana Ekavimsati* suitably to suit the new arrangement as follows:

*Ganapati, the son of Narasimha Sastry of the lineage of Vasishta, has thus adored Sri Ramana Guru who is Skanda, in forty verses.*

Thus the 1st edition *Forty verses in praise of Maharshi* was published in 1936.

Another verse commencing with the words *Vande Sri Ramana Rishah* was added in the 2nd edition as an invocation:

*I bow to the Lotus Feet of Sage Sri Ramana, the great Teacher, who showed me the effulgent Lord, transcending the darkness (of nescience).*

It is explained below how it happened.

Once Bhagavan engaged himself in collecting Sanskrit verses in praise of him by different devotees. I happened to be present at that time in the old Hall. I just mentioned to Bhagavan that Nayana had composed the verse quoted above.

Then Bhagavan asked me, 'Where did you get the verse and when it was composed by Nayana' etc. I replied that at the request of Sri Kapali Sastry and Sri S. Doraiswamy Iyer, in order to translate in Sanskrit the *Mother* written in English by Sri Aurobindo, Nayana heard the gist of that work from them and started the translation on 18.5.1928 under the title *Matru Vyuha Chatushkam* during his visit to the Aurobindo Asram. The verse under reference was an invocation for the proposed work. But he did not complete that work. Then Maharshi desired to see the note book containing the verse. The note book in Nayana's own handwriting was shown to Bhagavan the next day. Bhagavan at once copied this verse and said that this verse may be added to the *Chatvarimsat* in the beginning as an invocation in the 2nd edition, as the 1st edition was already published in 1936. Subsequent editions contain this verse.

These forty verses are being chanted daily in the morning at the shrine of Sri Bhagavan.

## Hold On Yet a While, Brave Heart

By Swami Vivekananda

If the sun by the cloud is hidden a bit,  
If the welkin shows but gloom,  
Still hold on yet a while, brave heart,  
The victory is sure to come.

No winter was but summer came behind,  
Each hollow crests the wave,  
They push each other in light and shade;  
Be steady then and brave.

The duties of life are sore indeed,  
And its pleasures fleeting, vain,  
The goal so shadowy seems and dim,  
Yet plod on through the dark, brave heart,  
With all thy might and main.

Not a work will be lost, no struggle vain,  
Though hopes be blighted, powers gone;  
Of thy loins shall come the heirs to all,  
Then hold on yet a while, brave soul,  
No good, is e'er undone.

Though the good and the wise in life are few,  
Yet theirs are the reins to lead,  
The masses know but late the worth;  
Heed none and gently guide.

With thee are those who see afar,  
With thee is the Lord of might,  
All blessings pour on thee, great soul,  
To thee may all come right!

## In Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

**F**ROM time immemorial Hindus have been loving and worshipping the Divine Mother in all her various and numerous manifestations. In modern times one notable instance of such great adoration was Paramahansa Ramakrishna's unswerving and frequently frenzied devotion to, and absorption in, Goddess Kali, the Divine Mother. Such was Ramakrishna's self-surrender to Kali that it precipitated his own realisation of the Divine. Happily, it is part of the all-embracing and barrierless catholicity of the Hindu mind and heart to revere without reservation the Divine Mother whenever or wherever she happens to appear. Whereas Catholics venerate Our Lady mostly because she in her sinless state gave birth to Jesus, the Hindus hold Mary in great esteem as she is one of the many manifestations of the Divine Mother. The Hindus regard the Divine Mother as the creative principle and *sakti* (energy) of Siva. She is thus the life-giving and life-nourishing force. Therefore the Virgin, in a sense, can be likened to the Holy Spirit itself that occasionally manifests itself.

The fact that Mary bore Jesus and brought him up well makes her a person of immense historical interest. Yet the maternal bond that tied her to Jesus is not the only reason for our bestowing upon her the quality of sacredness. Our Lady is worthy of worship in her own right, even if she had never been the mother of Christ, precisely on account of the inherent purity and divinity of the Divine Mother who still reappears on earth in the form of the Blessed Virgin.

There is an almost universal belief in the invisible existence and merciful benevolence of the Divine Mother; it complements the belief in an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent Divine Father. Many are the names by which she is called in diverse parts of the world but they all refer to the same celestial Queen of Heaven. The Chinese, for instance, adore the Divine Mother in the form of Kuan Yin, the celestial Bodhisatva of Compassion who has not only divine love but also miraculous powers. Thousands of Mahayana Buddhists aspire to attain the spiritually illuminated state of freedom from sorrow just by reverentially reciting the holy name of Kuan Yin or by contemplating her beautiful form with a heart overflowing with *bhakti*.

### Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue

(Virgin Mary)

Lovely Lady dressed in blue — Teach me how to pray! God was just your little boy, Tell me what to say!	Do you really think He cares If I tell Him things — Little things that happen? And Do the Angels' wings
Did you lift Him up, sometimes, Gently, on your knee? Did you sing to Him the way Mother does to me?	Make a noise? And can He hear Me if I speak low? Does He understand me now? Tell me — for you know?
Did you hold His hand at night? Did you ever try Telling stories of the world? O! And did He cry!	Lovely Lady dressed in blue — Teach me how to pray! God was just your little Boy, And you know the way.

At the outset we have referred to Mary's *sinless state*. This doctrine of the Immaculate Conception will have to be further elaborated as it is a vital aspect of Catholic theology. In 1854 Pope Pius IX issued the bull *Ineffabilis Deus*. By a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God the Virgin Mary was born *without* the stain of original sin. Neither is this doctrine related to the virgin-birth of Christ nor does it involve a virgin-birth of Mary who was born in the ordinary way. However her soul was sanctified with Divine Grace at the moment of its creation. Adam, the head and representative of the human race, did not accept God's gift of a supernatural life. Hence the Fall of Man. This grace and privilege was lost to Adam and his descendants, so we carry with us the stain of original sin and its attendant unrestrained self-love and loss of immortality. Mary was special in so far as she was free of original sin and its disastrous effects.

According to the *Protoevangelium*, the parents of the Virgin Mary — Saint Joachim and Saint Anne — were pious people. Much to their chagrin, they were a childless couple. The sadness of their condition increased as the Jews regarded childlessness as a great misfortune. So on a feast day Joachim went to the Temple with the intention of making a sacrificial offering. But the poor man was refused entry into the premises by a person called Ruben on the ground that he, being a man without offspring, was unworthy to be admitted. Joachim was treated as an altogether detestable untouchable. Instead of returning home, he went to the mountains and lived in solitude. It was there that he tried to ease his great grief by communicating his displeasure to the Lord. On hearing about her husband's prolonged absence from home, Anne, on her part, cried to the Lord and asked Him to remove the curse of sterility. That her child, if she were to have one, would be dedicated to the service of the Lord was her solemn promise. The fervent prayers of Joachim and Anne were answered. An angel visited them and promised them a daughter.



The Virgin and Baby Jesus by Adriaen Isenbrandt (? - 1551) (Holland)

They were thereafter blessed with a girl who was named Miriam or Mary. They kept to their word. Accordingly, quite early in life Mary was offered to the Lord in the service of the Temple.

Unfortunately for us, Mary does not get many mentions in the Bible, but her pervading presence features prominently in Catholic theology. Out of these few biblical references to her it is impossible to provide anything like an exhaustive and chronological narrative of her life. Yet by taking into consideration several landmarks in her life as given in the Gospels, it is possible to form a picture of her personality.

One cannot know exactly why it happened in the way it did, but it is of course possible to speculate about the underlying divine reasons, if any, relating to the betrothal of Joseph to Mary. They were, in a sense, not perfectly matched because, according to tradition, Joseph was considerably older than Mary who was an innocent teenager. Joseph, however, was a righteous and law-abiding carpenter. They were only engaged. Neither had they lived together as man and wife nor had they ever been involved in a sexual relationship. This background information is important and interesting as it helps to understand the subsequent unfoldment of events.

Acting on the instructions of God, the angel Gabriel visited Mary and said:

“Greetings to you, the one who is greatly favoured! The Lord is with you.”

Mary seemed troubled when she heard those words. Then the angel continued:

“Don’t be afraid for God is well disposed towards you. You will be pregnant and the son who is going to be born should be named Jesus. He will be a great person. He will be called the Son of the Most High. . . .”

Being very surprised, Mary said:

“How can this possibly happen since I am a virgin?”

Thereupon the angel declared:

“The Holy Spirit will unexpectedly meet you and you will be overshadowed by the Most High. Therefore the holy child will be called the Son of God. Even your elderly relation Elizabeth, who was said to be sterile, is six months pregnant! For God nothing is impossible.” “I am God’s servant,” remarked Mary, “let it take place as you have described.” Then the angel departed.

Mary hurried to Elizabeth’s home in the hill country of Judea. She wanted to meet Elizabeth. Theirs was an emotionally charged meeting. When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, Elizabeth’s baby leapt in her womb. Much moved by the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth exclaimed:

“Blessed are you among women!

Blessed also is your child!

But why am I so fortunate that the mother  
of my Lord should visit me?  
Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord told her  
is going to be done!”

How did Mary respond to Elizabeth’s greeting? Mary was filled with extreme joy. What she so exultantly expressed on that occasion, which is often called the *Magnificat*, is one of the finest songs of praise in the whole field of religious devotion. Here is an excerpt from the *Magnificat* which, incidentally, is the most important hymn of the evening service in the Roman Catholic Church:

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit  
rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call  
me blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great  
things for me —  
holy is his name.  
His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.  
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.  
He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.”<sup>1</sup>

Before returning home, Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months. Probably she was waiting for the birth of Elizabeth’s baby. This child later became John the Baptist who, among other things, proclaimed the advent of the long expected Messiah and thereby prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus.

At first Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly for he knew that she was with child. Probably he was under the impression that she had behaved disgracefully. Probably the man was very shocked and embarrassed. But an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup> After waking up Joseph acted accordingly and took her home as his wife.

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible, New International Version. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, p. 1026.

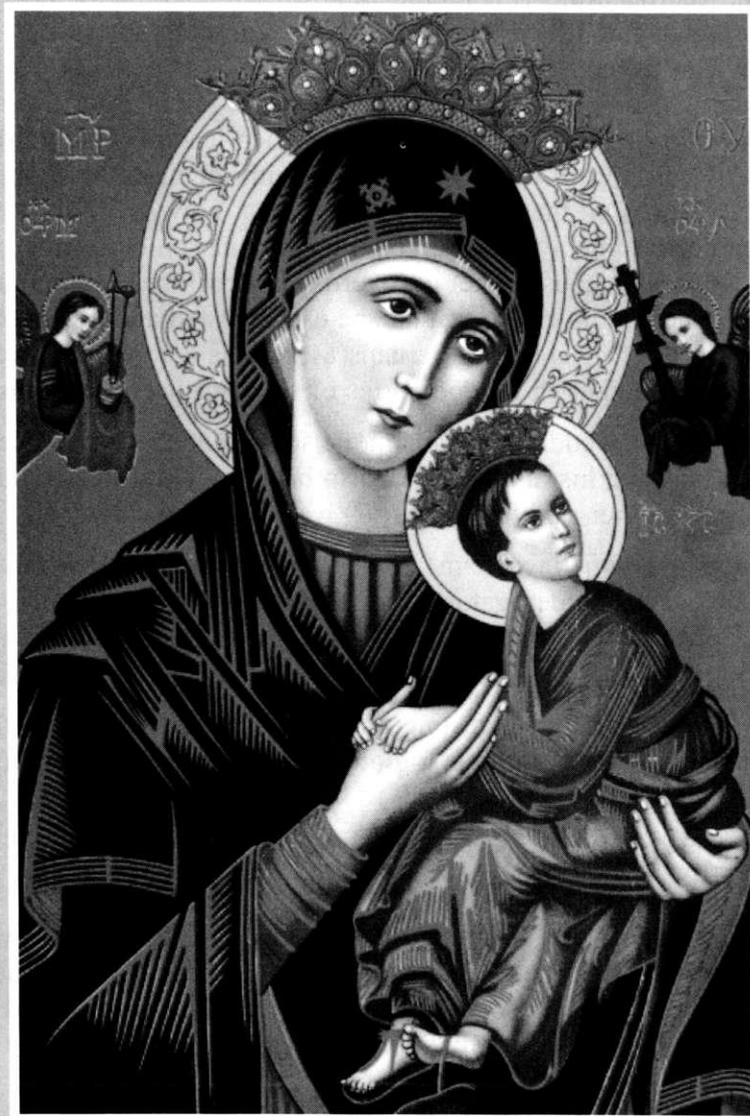
<sup>2</sup> The Holy Bible, p. 966.

Over the centuries theologians have been debating the contentious question as to whether or not Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary without sexual intercourse. Did Mary, in other words, conceive her son with her virginity unimpaired? There is a vast literature on this subject. Does it really matter if Jesus were humanly or divinely conceived? Are the accounts relating to the mysterious manner of Christ's birth of great value in helping sincere spiritual aspirants? What is of great significance is not how Jesus came into existence but whether or not Mary's life and her son's teachings have moral and spiritual excellence. Instead of concerning ourselves with the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ, let us rather concentrate on the unalloyed *purity* of their lives and the very practical merits of Jesus' message. In this regard, we would be well advised to heed what the Buddha taught: "Not by having matted hair nor by virtue of birth and family does one become a *brahmin*. But when in a *pure* person there is truth and righteousness, him do I call a *brahmin*" (*The Dhammapada*. 393).

In normal circumstances an expectant mother would need much rest and peace during the days preceding the delivery. But poor Mary must have had to put up with much stress and inconvenience, particularly because of the decree issued by Caesar Augustus which required that a census or an official survey of the population should take place in the whole Roman world. It was obligatory for people to go to their towns to register, so Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem for this purpose. It was there that Mary's firstborn son Jesus first appeared in their midst. That was a momentous event in human history. They found themselves in the presence of just an infant but a great soul all the same. His birth was not heralded in by a resounding fanfare of trumpets although he was destined to be the king of kings. Ironically, Mary had to wrap the great being in mere cloths and place him in a manger. Instead of a cosy cradle she had to use a feeding box in a stable or barn used by farm animals! Apparently she could not find a better place than that as there was no accommodation in the inn. Sometimes in situations of this kind the joy of motherhood counterbalances the pain of poverty. Besides, Mary, who believed in the angel Gabriel's prophetic words, was profoundly conscious that here was no ordinary child. Could she ever have received a more precious and a more glorious gift? Worldly riches never matter much to those who are in touch with the Eternal.

Mary and Joseph did not forget to take the child Jesus to Jerusalem where he was consecrated to the Lord. They cared for him with the result that he grew up well and became strong and wise. The youngster was in a state of Divine grace.

Once a year it was the practice of Mary and Joseph to go to Jerusalem for the celebrations marking the Jewish Feast of the Passover. On one such occasion they were in the process of returning home after the feast. They then discovered that their twelve-year-old Jesus was missing. Naturally they started searching for the lad among their friends and relations. As they were unsuccessful in their efforts to trace him, Mary and Joseph had to go back to Jerusalem. For three days they looked for him when lo and behold — they



found Jesus in the Temple courts where he was not only sitting among the teachers and listening to them, but also putting them questions! It is reported that those who heard the boy speaking were very surprised both by his intelligence and his answers. His parents also viewed him with astonishment. Needless to say, the extraordinariness of their son impressed them. Reproachfully, his mother said to him: 'Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.' 'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'<sup>3</sup> What a retort! This reply is so reminiscent of the words "in search of my Father" — the boy Ramana's renunciatory remark written in a letter when leaving Madurai for good. After leaving Jerusalem, Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.<sup>4</sup> Why did Mary treasure all these things in her heart? Presumably she disliked divulging her precious impressions relating to Jesus' precociousness because of her introvertive and reclusive temperament. A woman of great character, there is no evidence that she ever boasted about her son's uniqueness although she was greatly aware of it. Perhaps Mary was a contemplative who found it spiritually nourishing to cherish her memories of significant events in his inspiring life.

Mary was helpful at a wedding in Cana in the sense that she was concerned about the guests' comfort. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'

'Dear woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied, 'my time has not yet come'.<sup>5</sup> At that time "woman" was not a derogatory form of address but a deferential one. "My time has not yet come" means "The time for manifesting myself as the Messiah is yet to come."

Thereafter Mary told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."<sup>6</sup> When Mary gave that instruction, was she not subtly suggesting that they should not only do their duties but also follow his teachings? Is it possible to do *whatever* Jesus asks us to do unless at first our egos are crushed?

Only by means of self-surrender can we become passive instruments in the hands of the Divine. The annihilation of the self is the prelude to the discovery of the Self.

As there was no more wine, Jesus said to the servants: 'Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them: 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.' They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.<sup>7</sup> Very impressed by Jesus, his disciples were full of *bhakti*.

<sup>3</sup> The Holy Bible, p. 1029.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1029.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1064-1065.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1065.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1065.

Through the agency of the Invisible, Jesus performed this first miracle of his in the presence of the other wedding guests. With characteristic religious zeal, Mary probably rendered thanks to God on that festive occasion, particularly because her soul, as described in her *Magnificat*, glorifies the Lord.

Mary and Jesus' brothers arrived at a house where Jesus was giving spiritual instructions. They were standing outside. A seated crowd surrounded him. Jesus was informed that his mother and brothers were looking for him.

'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said: 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'<sup>8</sup>

Mary, we know, regarded Jesus as her firstborn son, but did Jesus consider Mary as his mother? Going by the above-mentioned declaration of Jesus, only those who conformed to the Divine will were strictly entitled to membership of his family. Jesus did not attach much importance to his natural or biological family and the tie of kinship *per se* might have seemed quite meaningless to him. Therefore one can surmise that the principal reason, if not the only one, why Jesus looked on Mary as his own mother was her inherent spirituality.

On one occasion when Jesus was talking about evil spirits and his driving out of demons by the finger of God, he was interrupted by a listener who praised Mary. A woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.'

He replied: 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'<sup>9</sup>

When a stranger spoke very highly of the Virgin, why did Jesus fail to state explicitly that he concurred with her opinion? Why did he seem so indifferent to the time-honoured maternal bond between mother and child? The lesson that can be learnt from this memorable event is that belonging to the universal and spiritual family of God is infinitely more important than being part of one's petty parental family.

The attitudes of both Jesus and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi to their respective mothers were strikingly similar. At the beginning Bhagavan carefully avoided addressing his mother Azhagammal as "Amma" (i.e. mother) lest she might develop a sense of superiority. Bhagavan would say: 'All women are my mothers, not only you.' She had a glimpse of His divinity.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Holy Bible, p.1005.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1043.

<sup>10</sup> *Bhagavan Ramana and Mother*, A.R. Natarajan: p.26, Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore.

Now probably a widow, the Virgin was one of the very few present at the tragic scene of the crucifixion. Also standing near the cross were Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene as well as John, the favourite disciple of Jesus. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Dear mother, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on this disciple took her into his home.<sup>11</sup> Before he breathed his last, Jesus entrusted Mary to his dear and faithful John.

There is a final reference to Mary in the Bible. Following the Ascension — the visible rising to heaven of Jesus after the Resurrection — Mary was continually devoting herself to prayer, along with the other women, the brothers of Jesus and the apostles. According to one tradition she lived with John in Jerusalem and died in her fiftyninth year; but according to another tradition Mary accompanied John to Ephesus (Turkey) where she has been buried.

About 2000 years have passed since the passing away of Our Lady. During this period proud empires have risen and fallen but she continues to be held in great veneration. If she decides to appear at a certain spot, it soon becomes a holy place for pilgrims of *every* faith. Hail Mary! The very hearing of her name evokes in people such sublime emotions that they quickly forget all the barriers of race, religion or nationality that had hitherto separated them. Thus she is a powerful unifying force in our madly divided world.

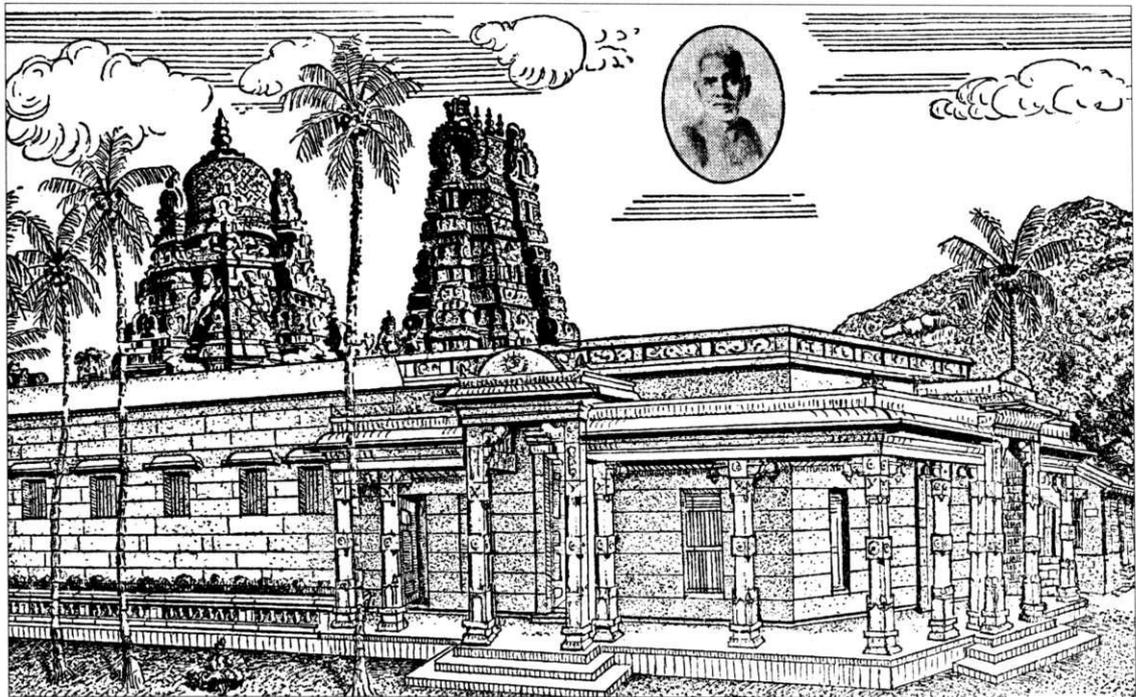
It would be wrong to view the Madonna as a dead saint for the reason that she is very much alive and flourishing. Millions flock every year to Medjugorje in Bosnia Hercegovina, where since 1981 six visionaries have been receiving messages from the Virgin. In one of her recent manifestations on August 25th 1999, Mary declared: "Give glory to God the Creator in the colours of nature. Through the smallest of flowers He speaks to you of His beauty and of the depth of His love with which He created you."<sup>12</sup>

Finally, Mary's immense popularity is attributable to her being an efficient and influential advocate before the celestial court of the Lord. Her intercessions enable the faithful to find forgiveness and favours. She is very instrumental in obtaining graces, especially for her devotees. Nevertheless, in Marian shrines such as Lourdes it is sometimes the case that even non-believers are miraculously healed of their terminal illnesses. How like a mother who has mercy on each of her children, whether they be godfearing or godless! Mary's love is not confined to those who adore her. She loves one and all. Thus Mary is a symbol of the perfect mother replete with understanding and boundless affection.

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<sup>11</sup> The Holy Bible, p.1088.

<sup>12</sup> *Echo of Mary Queen of Peace*, 147: September-October 1999, p.1.



Mother's temple: Picture on invitation to Kumbhabhishekam (1949)

## The Evolution of The Mother's Temple

**S**RI BHAGAVAN'S mother attained Self-realisation in her dying moments on the evening of 19.5.22. The devotees, after some deliberation, decided that her body should be buried rather than cremated, since that was the accepted procedure for women saints. They realised that it would be necessary to select a burial site at the foot of the hill, rather than on the hill itself, since the Arunachaleswara temple authorities, who administered the part of the hill on which Skandashram had been built, would not allow any bodies to be interred on the mountain itself. Their logic was that since the mountain itself was a *Sivalingam*, it would be an act of desecration to inter a

dead body on it. There was another temple rule which was also strictly enforced, which forbade the worship of any images on the hill. This meant that even if the devotees had secretly buried the body on the hill, they would not have been permitted to raise a shrine over it and perform ritual worship there. In the 1930s Bhagavan revealed, in a deposition about the ownership of Arunachala, that the temple authorities had reminded him of one of these rules shortly before his mother had died:

On the hill there was one Saraswati Swami. The *swami* advertised that he wanted to perform ritual worship before an image of Lord Subramania on the hill.

The temple authorities objected and stopped it. In an official notice they said that the hill itself is *Lingaswarupa*, and that to do ritual worship of another image on it is against the tradition of the *sastras*. On another occasion, when my mother attained *samadhi*, they raised a precautionary objection that her *Samadhi* should not be on the hill; they feared that we might build her *Samadhi* on the hill itself. On this occasion also their objection was that the hill is *Iswaraswarupa*.

Bhagavan concurred with this attitude by saying, a little later in his deposition, "There is an ancient tradition that this hill is *Lingaswarupa*; that is to say, this hill itself is God. This tradition is not to be found anywhere else. That is the cause and glory of this place."

Because of these rules and traditions it was decided, on the evening that the mother died, that her body should be buried at the foot of the hill on the southern side of Arunachala. This location was selected because it was a traditional site for the burial of *sadhus*. T.P. Ramachandra Iyer has reported in *Bhagavan Smrtulu* that Bhagavan initially had the idea that the body should be buried quietly and without ostentatious ceremonies. He told T.P. Ramachandra Iyer that he had first instructed the devotees to "take the body in the dark without making any noise and without anyone knowing about it. Make a pit in no-man's land. Bury it quickly and come back before dawn."

Since it would have been well-nigh impossible to carry the body down the hill in the middle of the night, the plan was not

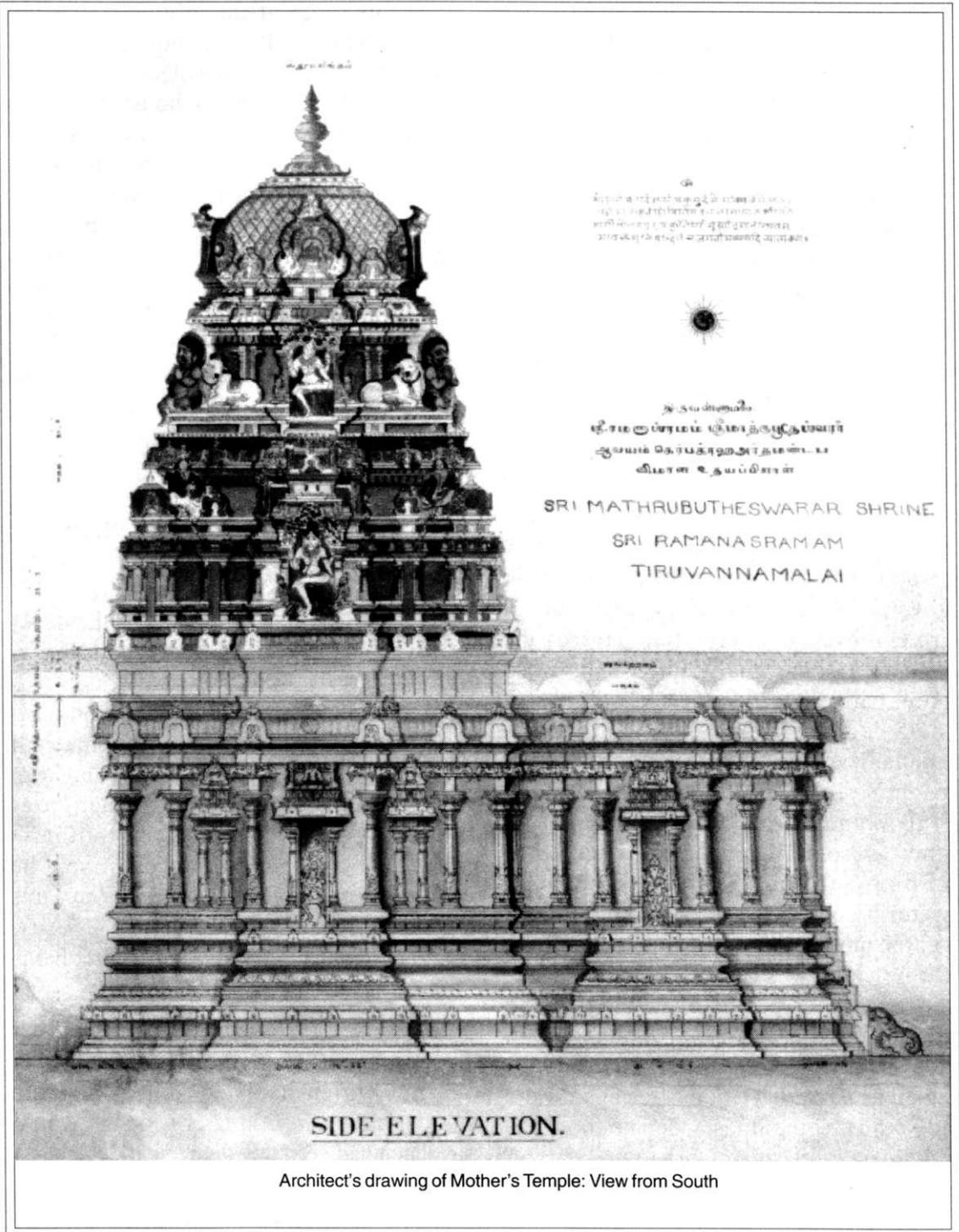
carried out. Instead, the devotees sat around the body until about 4 a.m., chanting verses from the *Tiruvachakam*. The burial party eventually left with the body just before dawn, at about 5 a.m.

The site which was initially selected for the *Samadhi* was rather close to the road. Sri Ramakrishna Iyer, a devotee who was also the village munsif, suggested that it be relocated nearer the hill. He pointed out that if the burial site was well away from the road it would be very convenient to construct a temple over it in later years. His suggestion was accepted and a large *Samadhi* pit was dug according to the rules in the *Tirumantiram* which have been laid down for the burial of *jnanis*.

While the pit was being dug, the mother's body was seated under a big *peepul* tree on the bank of the Pali Tirtham. So many devotees came from town to pay their last respects that a large area of cactus and shrub had to be cleared to accommodate them. After *abhishekam* had been done to the body, it was taken to the place of burial.

Kunju Swami has described what happened next:

Sacred ash and sacred grasses were put inside the *Samadhi* and the mother's body was lowered into it. Sri Bhagavan and others each put in a handful of *vibhuti* and camphor. It was then covered with a stone slab on the top of which was placed a *Sivalingam*. The *lingam* was then worshipped in the traditional manner. At twelve noon all of us left for Palakottu. Bhagavan walked very slowly while the *nagaswaram* player played on his instrument with great enthusiasm. The



Architect's drawing of Mother's Temple: View from South

distance from the *Samadhi* to Palakottu is not much more than hundred yards, but it took the procession an hour to cover the distance. It was a beautiful scene as the musician played on his instrument with great gusto, looking to Bhagavan who was setting the slow pace at the head of the procession and slightly swaying in time to the rhythm of the music.<sup>1</sup>

From that day on *puja* was performed daily at the shrine by Chinnaswami and Ramanatha Brahmachari. They both came down from Skandashram every morning and returned back there in the evening. On the tenth day after the mother's liberation a special *puja* was done, about a thousand people were fed, and the *moksha deepam*, the light of liberation, was lit at the shrine. It was then decided that the *pujas* should continue for one *mandala*, a period of fortyeight days. After a few days of the *mandala*, Dandapani Swami, who was also taking part in the *pujas*, suggested that it would be more convenient if both he and Chinnaswami lived permanently at the mother's shrine as the daily trek to and from Skandashram was proving to be rather tiresome. Chinnaswami agreed to the plan and together with Dandapani Swami he constructed a coconut leaf hut over the mother's *Samadhi* and another hut nearby which was used as a kitchen. Rice, *dhal* and other provisions, which were brought down daily from Skandashram were used for feeding the resident *sadhus* as well as *naivedya* (food offerings for the daily *puja*). Sometimes, when no food was available Chinnaswami had to go begging in town to acquire the provisions for the daily *puja*.

At this stage of the ashram's development, food was often in short supply. The items of food which devotees contributed were stored in town in the house of a devotee called Vasudeva Sastry. Each day he would send enough provisions to Skandashram for a meal to be cooked there. As some of these provisions were taken away to the mother's *Samadhi*, the *sadhus* who lived at Skandashram occasionally did not have enough food to eat. Vasudeva Sastry felt that the resources were not sufficient to maintain two establishments, one at Skandashram and the other at the mother's *Samadhi*. Since some of the other devotees felt the same way, he sent a note to Ramanatha Brahmachari, who was living at Skandashram, which read, "Devotees give not to Vasudeva but to Vaasudeva". Since Vasudeva was the parent of Vaasudeva, the note implied that the devotees wanted their donations to go to Bhagavan and not to the institution which was beginning to grow up around the mother's *Samadhi*. When Ramanatha Brahmachari showed the note to Bhagavan, Bhagavan expressed his approval of the activities which were going on at the mother's *Samadhi* by saying, "How could there be Vaasudeva without Vasudeva?" When this remark was conveyed to Vasudeva Sastry, he abandoned his opposition to the diversion of food.

Shortly afterwards Bhagavan left Skandashram for good and went to live in the hut which had been built over the mother's *Samadhi*. In later years he would say that it had been the 'divine will' which had

<sup>1</sup> *The Mountain Path*, 1981, p. 188.

prompted him to move down the hill and take up residence in his mother's shrine. But perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it was the divine will that prevented him from leaving the shrine to go back to Skandashram, for he once told Devaraja Mudaliar, "After mother's death I used to come down now and then to the *Samadhi* and return to Skandashram. One day about six months after the mother's death, I went there on one such visit and after sitting there for sometime wanted to get up and go back. However something told me that I should not go back but stay on there. It was as if my legs refused to get up. And I stayed on. That is how the ashram began. Who knew then that all this would grow up?"<sup>2</sup>

Bhagavan added further sanctity to the mother's *Samadhi* by living in the small building which had been erected over it for a period of five years and a half. He moved out of it only in 1928 when the devotees constructed the old hall on an adjacent piece of land.

In the mid 1930s Bhagavan himself decided that a more substantial building was needed to house the mother's *Samadhi*. He decided to utilise some badly baked bricks which had been abandoned by some brickmakers who had set up a temporary kiln near the ashram. Some devotees in town were called on to help move the bricks. One night they all formed a human chain, with Bhagavan as one of the links, and transferred all the bricks one by one to the ashram. The following day a mud and brick wall was constructed around the *Samadhi*. One devotee who lived with Bhagavan in the 1920s told me that Bhagavan himself

did all the work on the inside of the wall while a professional mason worked on the outside. The temple was completed by erecting a thatched roof on top of the wall. This construction, the forerunner of the temple which now stands on the same site remained unchanged for more than ten years.

In the 1930s Sri Ramanasramam began to develop and expand. The cowshed, the dining room and the kitchen, the storeroom, the *patasala*, the old office and the bookstore were all built in a burst of activity between 1929 and 1938. At the end of this period the only remaining large, uncompleted project was a plan to build a proper stone temple over the mother's *Samadhi*. Since the construction of such a temple would be enormously expensive, many devotees were opposed to the plan on the grounds that it would be a white elephant that the ashram could ill afford. At Bhagavan's sixtieth birthday celebrations which took place in January 1939, there was a long debate between those devotees who wanted a big temple and those who thought that the ashram's funds would be better invested in building more accommodation for visitors. The anti-temple group also wanted to acquire large tracts of land on which the ashram's food could be grown. Bhagavan remained aloof from the debate and no one at that time really knew what his views on the subject were.

The temple construction could not begin until Bhagavan himself gave the word. He generally delegated most day-to-day management decisions to Chinnaswami but in the case of building projects he exercised

<sup>2</sup> *My Recollections*, pp.134-5.

a strict but discreet control. When buildings were being constructed in the ashram he would personally supervise all the work; he would allocate jobs on a day-to-day basis, and no new work was ever started unless it was clear that Bhagavan had approved of it.

Throughout the 1930s a devotee called Annamalai Swami had been supervising all the major building projects in the ashram. Since he had a daily appointment with Bhagavan to get fresh instructions for the next day's building work, Chinnaswami decided that he might be able to find out what Bhagavan's views on the temple were. It had long been accepted that a traditional stone temple would eventually be erected over the *Samadhi*, but Bhagavan had not yet indicated whether it should be a large one or a small one. Chinnaswami therefore approached Annamalai Swami and said, "Bhagavan always tells his building plans directly to you. Please ask him what we should do about the mother's temple. Ask him whether we should build it simply or on a large scale."

Annamalai Swami told me that when he conveyed this query to Bhagavan, Bhagavan finally disclosed his decision, "It will be good if it is constructed well, and on a large scale." Chinnaswami who had been in doubt about Bhagavan's intentions, was delighted because he had been wanting to build a big temple over his mother's *Samadhi* for many years. He immediately began to make preparations for the construction.

Since it was not ordinary building work, an expert outsider had to be brought in. After careful consideration, the whole

project was eventually entrusted to Vaidyanatha Sthapati, an expert in temple architecture and engineering. He brought with him many accomplished stone masons who had a lot of experience in temple construction.

When the project started, the ashram only had enough money to pay for a small portion of the work. Bhagavan knew that funds were in short supply, but he made it clear that he wanted the temple to be financed out of unsolicited donations. He repeatedly told Chinnaswami and all the other devotees that they should never ask for funds on the ashram's behalf. Chinnaswami however, felt that the temple could not be built without an aggressive fund raising drive, so he went against Bhagavan's wishes and made several attempts to raise money. One typical effort which was followed by a typical Bhagavan response, was described by T.P. Ramachandra Iyer in *Bhagavan Smrtulu*:

There was once a shortage of funds while the temple was being built. Money was needed immediately. At that time a devotee called Chaganlal Yogi came from Bombay for the first time. On seeing him Chinnaswami suggested to me, "We need Rs. 50,000 for the temple. So why don't the three of us go to Jamnalal Bajaj for the money and bring it? Introduce Chaganlal Yogi to me so that we can start."

Chaganlal Yogi felt that the proposal was unacceptable. But because he was a newcomer and was feeling rather shy, he felt that he had no alternative but to accept. Chinnaswami made all the arrangements for packing his luggage, but before we



Sri Bhagavan at *Balalayam* of Matrubhuteswara (temporary shrine during construction of temple)

could depart we had to first cross the hurdle of telling Bhagavan about our mission. Chinnaswami never came before Bhagavan to speak; he always used to send a messenger if any information had to be passed on. On this occasion he selected me and asked me to tell Bhagavan about our journey. "How can I tell Bhagavan about such a thing?" I asked. "You come with me."

Chinnaswami did not even have the courage for that, so we had to collect some other people. We all went to Bhagavan while he was having a rest alone in the afternoon. We stood before him for sometime but he didn't even look at us. His gaze was fixed elsewhere. Each of us wanted one of the others to speak. Finally, Mouniswami told him what we wanted. For a long time Bhagavan made no reply, but eventually he spoke, "I have told you not to beg in my name. Now I am telling you again. Be satisfied with what you have. What is to happen will happen! If you now go and ask for money, will not the donors ask you whether you have my agreement or not, and whether I gave you permission for this? What do you intend to tell them if they ask questions like this?"

Chaganlal Yogi had got the excuse he was looking for. He told Bhagavan, "Unless we tell them that you consented to this, none of them will give even a paisa."

What more could they do? They slipped out one by one, and Chinnaswami's journey was cancelled.

After this incident Bhagavan remarked, "Did the construction of all these

buildings occur because of my begging? It happened in the way it was destined to happen. Nothing happens purely as a result of anyone's own efforts."

The construction of the temple which was concluded at the beginning of 1949, took approximately ten years. When it was finished, the temple complex included a large stone hall which was originally intended to replace the old hall which Bhagavan had lived in since 1928. A large stone sofa was installed there for him to sit on, but when the time came to make the move, Bhagavan gave several indications that he didn't want either to sit or live there. When he was first shown where his new sofa would be located, he complained that if he sat there, the monkeys and squirrels would no longer have access to him. And later, when a sculptor was carving a stone statue of him he deflected a request that he move to the new hall by saying, "Why don't you get the stone Swami to sit on the sofa?" He was finally persuaded to sit in the new hall, but even after the move he still continued to complain. After sometime in his new residence he noticed a group of villagers trying to summon up enough courage to come in and see him. On that occasion he protested that the hall had been built on such a grandiose scale that poor people who wanted *darshan* would be too intimidated by the size and grandeur of the building to enter it. Bhagavan eventually stayed in the new hall for about six months. The remaining few months of his life were spent in the *maha nirvana* room.

Although the main purpose of the mother's temple and the adjoining new hall was to provide an appropriate

structure over the *Samadhi* of the mother, Chinnaswami had long nurtured an idea that Bhagavan's *Samadhi* could also be incorporated in it. It seems that he had a plan to inter Bhagavan's body in a shrine which would be slightly to the north of the new hall. Chinnaswami had planned to make a large doorway in the northern wall which would connect the new hall with this shrine. In his reminiscences,<sup>3</sup> K.K. Nambiar related the story of how Chinnaswami asked him to build a portion of the northern verandah of the new hall in such a way that it could be easily dismantled and replaced by an additional *Samadhi* shrine. Chinnaswami tried to get Bhagavan's approval for this scheme. He sent a plan to Bhagavan which gave details of a large doorway in the northern wall of the new hall, but Bhagavan rejected it and sent back a reply that the wall should remain as it was. It would seem from these incidents that although Bhagavan fully supported the construction of the mother's temple and the activities that were conducted there, he had no inclination either to live or be buried in any part of it.

The *kumbhabhishekam* ceremony for the mother's temple, which was performed in March 1949 was a fitting climax to the years

of effort which had been spent in its construction. The ceremonies, which lasted four days, were attended by tens of thousands of people from all over India. On the final day alone, over 15,000 people were fed in the ashram. So many visitors came that extra trains were run from Madras and Madurai. For four days a shuttle service of buses ferried visitors to and from the railway station, and the local Post Office had to be temporarily upgraded and expanded for a week to handle all the extra business. Two hundred priests under the supervision of the Shankaracharya of Puri carried out the rituals while Bhagavan himself empowered the *Sri Chakra* that was to be worshipped in the main shrine. The temple had come a long way since the coconut leaf hut of 1922. Bhagavan himself summed up the rapid development of both the temple and the ashram when he remarked to T.P. Ramachandra Iyer, "I suggested that the body be buried silently before dawn. But things happened the way they had to happen. See how many constructions have now come up on the site where a body was silently buried!"

<sup>3</sup> *The Guiding Presence of Sri Ramana*, pp. 63-4.

### SRI RAMANA SHINES WITHIN ME

Since Sri Ramana shines within me as God, without my egotistically thinking 'I am *Brahman*', I shine as That, the space of true *jnana*, which is God, having lost my body-consciousness, *prana*, mind and 'I'. I have thereby attained *samadhi*. Who can know this (my shining as That) except Himself (Sri Ramana) and myself? Therefore, my dear girl, seek the true import of the word 'I', and thereby lovingly take bath by diving deep into the Heart and destroying the 'I'.

— Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai.



## Shankarlal Banker's Visits to Sri Ramanasramam

By M.V. Kamath and V.B. Kher

*We present here an excerpt from Chapter VI of The Story of Militant but Non-violent Trade Unionism by the authors, recording the memorable experiences of Shankarlal Banker at Sri Ramanasramam.*

*Shankarlal was a close follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He did valuable work in the national cause in many ways, inspired and guided by his leader. It is interesting to note that when he met Gandhiji for the first time in London (sometime during 1914-15), he was a fully westernised aristocrat living in high style.*

*One of the several contributions of Shankarlal was his work towards ensuring the welfare of the textile workers of Ahmedabad (in 1918), in close collaboration with Anasuya Behn. He organised their trade union activities on Gandhian lines.*

*On learning about the experiences of Shankarlal at Sri Ramanasramam, Gandhiji advised Babu Rajendra Prasad and Jamnalal Bajaj to visit Maharshi. This visit took place in 1938.<sup>1</sup>*

**G**ANDHI had asked Shankarlal to involve himself in the propagation of *khadi*, but at one stage he began to have serious doubts about what his role should be in the scheme of things. It was at that stage that he received guidance from an altogether unexpected source — Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi!

And this came about in the unlikeliest way.

In 1934 Shankarlal was living at Mirjapur in Ahmedabad where he met a high-ranking officer of the German Air Force and a member, besides, of the

German aristocracy. The officer was staying as a guest of Ambalal Sarabhai but took the occasion to call on Shankarlal and Anasuya. In the course of their conversation the officer happened to mention his interest in matters spiritual and philosophical and wondered whether either of them had heard of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. To their embarrassment neither Anasuya

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Reproduced with kind permission of the publishers from *The Story of Militant but Non-violent Trade Unionism*, M.V. Kamath and V.B. Kher, pp. 191-196. Pub: Navajivan Mudranalaya, Ahmedabad - 380 014.

<sup>1</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 502.

nor Shankarlal had heard of that saint of Tiruvannamalai. Somewhat surprised, the German officer said: "Do go and see him and get his *darshan*. He is a rare personality!" The fact that a member of the German nobility (a Baron) and an officer of the German Air Force should have made that suggestion intrigued Anasuya and she asked Shankarlal that the next time he went to the south on his regular tours, he must find out more about Ramana Maharshi.

In the summer of 1935 Shankarlal was at Ootacamund (Ooty) and after he spent a few days there, he started his round of visits of *khadi* centres. It was his practice to look into the affairs of such centres in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and then move on to Wardha to report to Gandhi. He reached Madras via Tirupur. At Tirupur he invariably dropped in on an old friend, Mohanlal Purohit, Manager of Jeevanlal Aluminium Co., who not only took a great deal of interest in *khadi*, but was a great admirer of Gandhi. He found Shankarlal's regular visits were useful for discussions on Gandhian philosophy.

Indeed, it was at Purohit's suggestion that Gandhi had cut a gramophone disc on the nature of God and was so taken by it that he learnt Gandhi's brief talk by heart! It was at Purohit's residence that Shankarlal first heard the disc being played.

As luck would have it, the day he called on Purohit he chanced to meet the editor of *Sunday Times*, Madras, Mr M.S. Kamath. Kamath was a great devotee of Ramana Maharshi and Shankarlal started to ply him with questions. Kamath thereupon suggested that Shankarlal should accom-

pany him to Tiruvannamalai and Purohit promptly lent his car for the journey.

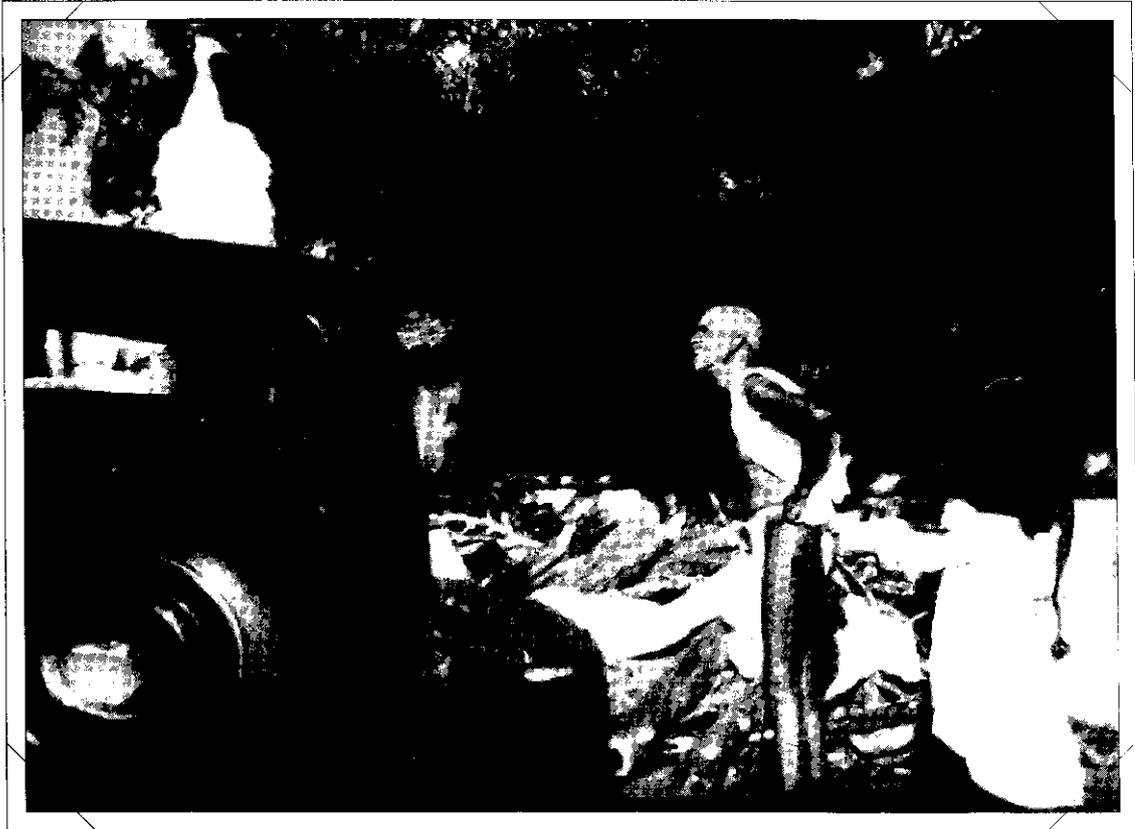
The journey from Tirupur to Tiruvannamalai took four hours and the party reached there around 7 p.m. At dinner time Shankarlal saw the Maharshi for the first time and noticed that the latter had "lustre in his eyes". Kamath wanted to introduce Shankarlal to the Maharshi during meditation time but Shankarlal excused himself. Kamath did not press him.

The next morning Shankarlal joined other guests and visitors in the prayer hall where Maharshi was present. He had plenty of things on his mind. As an inspector of *khadi* centres he had all sorts of problems to handle, but here, in the prayer hall, all anxieties seemed to vanish.

As he later recorded:

Suddenly I began to experience a strange feeling of peace!... All the unrest appeared to vanish.... I remembered the line from the *shloka* Gandhiji used to recite to me in jail in 1922 that ended with *tad brahma nishkalamaham na cha bhootasangah* ("I am that pure Brahman and not this body made up of *panchabhootas* or five elements"). I had the feeling that I was that 'pure Brahman' and the words *Shivoham, Shivoham* raced through my mind. I was astonished at this phenomenon.

Shankarlal wondered whence came those thoughts, considering that he was not a very spiritually inclined person. He attributed it to the environment he found himself in. To his surprise Shankarlal experienced a feeling of "extraordinary



A rare picture of Sri Bhagavan, not published so far

self-confidence". He felt that the experience was real. As he took leave of Maharshi he felt a great deal of peace and encouragement. When later that month he called on Gandhi, he narrated his experience to the Mahatma who not only expressed his joy but suggested to Shankarlal that on the next occasion he should stay longer at Ramanashram.

This was in the summer of 1936. Once again Shankarlal found himself at Tiruvannamalai and in the presence of Maharshi. This time he made bold to ask the Maharshi, "What books should I read for spiritual progress?" The reply startled

Shankarlal. Maharshi queried, "Books? Why books?" He repeated the words, 'Why books?'

Maharshi added, "Make your heart pure and you are bound to see the light!"

That was to make a lasting impression on Shankarlal's mind and he kept thinking over it during his entire day's stay at the Ashram.

On the train that was to take him to Madras, Shankarlal later recorded, around 4 a.m. he suddenly woke up and saw the picture of Bhagavan floating before his eyes! As he wrote, "I opened my eyes fully,

rubbed them, and wonder of wonders, I felt as if he was standing before me.... I had a continuous feeling of exultation and joy as if there was no need to think or have any anxiety about anything in the world!"

Shankarlal again reported this experience to Gandhi who recommended that Shankarlal visit Annamalai more often. "After listening to you," Gandhi told Shankarlal, "I have suggested to Rajendra Babu and Jamnalaji also to go there!"

Shankarlal was back in Tiruvannamalai in the summer of 1937. This time he took with him pictures of famine-stricken people in Tirupur. He was seated in the prayer hall along with others just as Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi was talking of Self-realization and the bliss of the soul. This distressed Shankarlal who had seen starving people in Tirupur. How, he wondered aloud to his friend Dr Syed, of the Oriental Research Institute, Allahabad, who was sitting next to him, could one reconcile misery with the bliss of the soul? And he showed him the pictures of starvation he had brought with him.

Dr Syed did the unexpected thing. He went over to Bhagavan and placing the pictures in his lap said, "This gentleman here says when there is so much misery in the world, how can we think of bliss of the soul?"

Instead of being fazed by the question Ramana Maharshi replied gently that while all effort should be made to help those in distress, one should not take individual credit for the act. The Lord alone was the saviour of the people. Maharshi said that he often saw people who had not eaten for

two or three days and yet they seemed to glow with some inner joy. "Where did that joy come from? Only the Almighty could give it to them!"

When Shankarlal retrieved the snapshots and looked at them again, he was to observe what he had not noticed before! Those poor starving people engaged in breaking stones seemed to have smiles on their faces! For Shankarlal it was a revelation.

Shankarlal met Maharshi the next day quite unexpectedly. This time he wondered how marvellous it would be if Maharshi and Gandhi met. To which Maharshi replied with a soft smile, "Distance does not exist!"

When Shankarlal next visited Wardha, he repeated this conversation to Gandhi who said, "Haven't you understood? Distance does not exist the way we think. I have written on the subject only three days ago!"

Gandhi called for that article and read out to Shankarlal what he had written:

And since thought is the root of speech and action, the quality of the latter corresponds to that of the former. Hence, perfectly controlled thought is itself the power of the highest potency and can become self-acting. That seems to me to be the meaning of the silent prayer of the heart. If a man is after the image of God, he has but to will a thing in the limited sphere allotted to him and it becomes. Such power is impossible in one who dissipates his energy in any way whatsoever even as steam kept in a leaky pipe yields no power....

In anyone who has to organise vast masses of mankind for non-violent

action, the full control described by me has to be attempted and virtually achieved. This control is unattainable save by the grace of God....

In the summer of 1939 Shankarlal's health was affected and he tendered his resignation as Secretary of the All India Spinners' Association. He now turned his mind to spiritual matters. He was advised by Swami Atmanandji and Swami Ramanandji to devote himself to a life of *manan* and *chintan* — meditation and contemplation. He took to reading works like Shankara's *Viveka Chudamani*. The *swamis* advised Shankarlal to withdraw his mind from all mundane activities and concentrate on spiritual study. So, after resigning from the AISA, Shankarlal was free from day-to-day work though he continued to take interest in the labour movement. But should he indulge even in that activity? This bothered him.

Next time he was in Tiruvannamalai he had the privilege, in the very early hours of the morning to watch Ramana Maharshi engaged in cleaning and chopping vegetables in the kitchen. He noticed, as he did so that Maharshi was going about his work with remarkable expertise. He even heard

Maharshi telling a devotee how to slice a pumpkin skilfully! It was, thought Shankarlal, a lesson to him, too: *Do a job, do it well, do it with complete detachment!*

He could not resist waking up the next day at 4 a.m. to go to the kitchen. This time he heard Bhagavan asking someone in Tamil, "Is Banker there?" When he was told that Banker was present and sitting outside, Ramana Maharshi came out, with a ladle full of cooked lentils and looking quizzically at Shankarlal, invited him to taste it. "It is a bit hot. But I cooked it myself!" said Maharshi by way of explanation.

Shankarlal tasted it and exclaimed, "Why, it is very tasty!"

At that Maharshi broke into laughter and went back to the kitchen.

At that point in time, Shankarlal was later to write, he had got the answer to the problem that was bothering him, about engaging himself in some activity even while engaged in spiritual pursuits. Wasn't Maharshi telling him by example, that to be working actively was as important as searching for spiritual bliss?

Cleared were his doubts. He was never again to be bothered by them!

**We may rest assured that nothing whatever happens on earth without God's permission. What a source of consolation to know that even the sufferings and adversities which God sends us are for our very best, and have in view our eternal salvation. Ah, how great will be our shame when we stand before the judgement seat of God and see clearly the loving intention of Divine Providence in sending us those trials which we tried to evade, thus battling against our own salvation!**

— St. Alphonsus Lagouri.

## *Sri Ramana Nool Thirattu*

*The Nool Thirattu of Sri Bhagavan in Tamil carries a Preface (also in Tamil) written by T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, a well known, outstanding devotee. One special feature of this Preface is that there is a significant correction, an affirmation by Sri Bhagavan himself to the effect that aspirants who study the works are certain to attain the bliss of liberation.*

*We present here an extract from T.K. Sundaresa Iyer's At the Feet of Bhagavan explaining the circumstances in which he wrote the Preface. We also present its translation.*

### Genesis of Introduction to the Collected Works

IT was about 1927 when Sri Bhagavan's *Nool Thirattu* in Tamil was under preparation to be published. There was talk among the Ashram pandits that the book must have a preface although the devotees of Maharshi considered that nobody was qualified to write a preface to his works. The pandits proposed the writing of a preface, but none of them came forward to write it, each excusing himself that he was not qualified for the task. It was a drama of several hours as one proposed another for the purpose, and each declined the honour. Bhagavan was watching all this quietly.

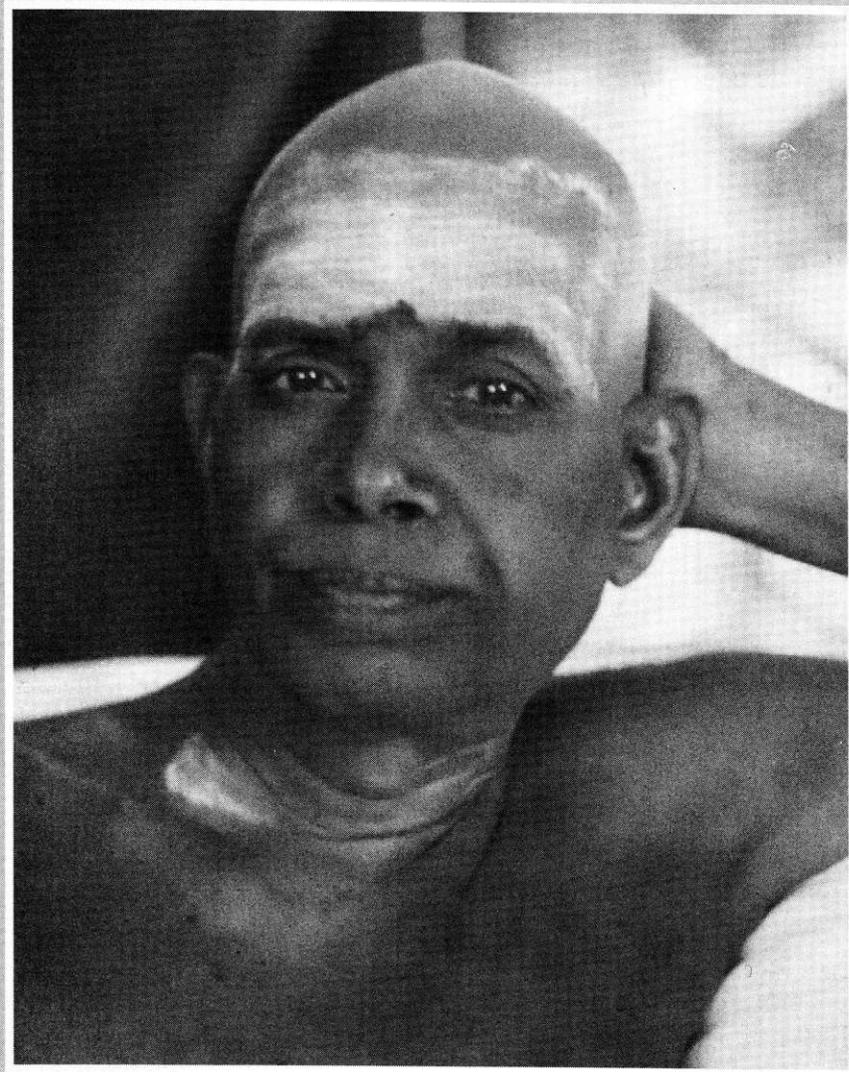
At about 10-30 in the night, as I was passing beside the Hall, Sri Bhagavan looked at me and said, "Why not you write the preface yourself?"

I was taken aback at his proposal, but meekly said, "I would venture to write it only if I had Bhagavan's blessing in the task." Bhagavan said, "Do write it, and it will come all right."

So I began writing at the dead of night, and to my great surprise within three quarters of an hour I made a draft as if impelled, driven by some Supreme Force. I altered not even a comma of it, and at 2 o'clock in the early morning I placed it at the feet of Bhagavan. He was happy to see how the contents were arranged and to note the simplicity of the expressions used.

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The *Ramana Nool Thirattu* has been translated into English and published as the *Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*.



He passed it as all right and asked me to take it away.

But as I had taken the written sheets of paper only a few steps away, Sri Maharshi beckoned me to show them to him once again. I had concluded the Preface in the following way: "It is hoped that this work in the form of Bhagavan's Grace will give to all who aspire to eternal Truth, the Liberation in the form of gaining supreme Bliss

shaped as the taking away of all sorrow." Maharshi said, "Why have you said 'It is hoped'? Why not say 'It is certain'?" So saying, he corrected with his own hands my 'nambukiren' into 'tinnam'.

Thus Sri Maharshi set his seal of approval to the book, giving to his devotees that great charter of Liberation, in the form of his teaching (*upadesa*) which leaves no trace of doubt about it in the mind.

## The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi

T.K. SUNDARESA IYER'S PREFACE

(Translated from the Tamil Original)

This is Tiruvannamalai, the sacred place where Arunachala, the self-created Linga of Fire shines. Arunachala, the centre of the earth, attracts seekers who are rich in *tapas* and confers liberation on those who simply think of it. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi who is of the form of Dakshinamurti and always abides in the Self graces this place in order to enable countless souls to attain liberation from *samsara* and reach the bliss of the final beatitude. He confers Grace from his state of supreme silence. His extraordinary compassion flows like a flood. This *Ramana Nool Thirattu* (The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi) is a golden work, it is nectar, it is his *prasada* to us.

It is due to our good merit and luck that compositions of various types — prose, poetry, dialogue and song — are available in this work. The learned and not so learned

alike, can, according to their levels of understanding, read it and be profited.

*Sri Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* (Five Hymns to Arunachala), the first part of this work was composed in the early days when Sri Bhagavan had just begun to speak, breaking *mouna*. It is the flood of the Self itself. Devotees should be delighted to go through the explanations on *bhakti* and *jnana* provided by Ramana Murti himself. He is the Supreme Being, and it comes from his Heart. This revelation by him confirms his own verse in *Akshara Mana Malai*, "That each one is Reality Itself, Thou wilt of Thy Nature show, O Arunachala!"

Regarding *Upadesa Noon Malai*, the second work of this compilation: *Upadesa Undiyar* (The Essence of Instruction) was written in response to the request of a devotee, Sri Muruganar. He had started

composing *Tiruvunthiyar* but wanted Bhagavan to guide him. Sri Bhagavan wrote the rest of the verses himself and thus completed this great work.

*Ulladu Narpadu* (Forty Verses) and its supplement were written in response to the requests of the devotees from time to time. *Ekatma Panchakam* (Five Verses on the Self) was first composed in Telugu and subsequently translated by Sri Bhagavan himself into Tamil. *Appala Pattu* (The Song of the *Poppadam*), specially composed by Sri Bhagavan when his mother Alagammal desired him to help in the preparation of *appalam* is a wonderful piece. When Muruganar composed the *pallavi* and *anupallavi* (the first and second parts) of the song *Anma Viddai* (Self Knowledge) and could not proceed with the rest, he sought the help of Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan complied with his request and completed the *charanams* (the third part). The whole song is now very well known. This *Upadesa Noon Malai* (Original Works) becomes sweeter and sweeter as you taste (read) it. The more one reads, the more and more one gets enlightened. Devotees will learn this through experience.

After this feast of Knowledge we have the divine words of Siva and Krishna translated by Sri Bhagavan himself. Thus we have *Devi Kalottaram - Jnana Achara Vichara Patalam* (taught by Siva to Parvati), *Sarvajnanottara - Atma Sakshatkara Prakaranam* (taught by Siva to Kumara) and *Bhagavad Gita Saram* (the essence of the *Gita* taught by Lord Krishna). Translations from the original Sanskrit of Sri Shankaracharya, of *Dakshinamurti Stotra* (Hymn to Dakshinamurti), *Atma Bodha*

(Knowledge of the Self), as well as *Guru Stuti* and *Hastamalaka Stotra* (composed by his disciples) form the third part.

The fourth part consists of translations in prose of Shankara's *Viveka Chudamani* and *Drig Drisya Vivekam*.

At the end comes *Arul Mozhi Thokuppu* (Words of Grace) consisting of three works — *Nan Yar* (Who am I?), *Vichara Sangraham* and *Upadesa Manjari* (Spiritual Instruction). *Nan Yar* consists of instructions received from Sri Bhagavan by Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai and compiled by him. Although short, this work captivates the heart in a wonderful manner. *Vichara Sangraham* (Self Enquiry): These instructions were given by Sri Bhagavan in writing, in response to the queries of Gambhiram Seshayya. Sri Bhagavan was not in the habit of speaking at that time. The speciality of this work is that Sri Bhagavan has given instructions on paths like *karma*, *bhakti*, etc. This was unusual since he taught the method of Self-enquiry, in the main. The contingent reason for giving instruction on other paths was that the questioner himself was following these. *Upadesa Manjari* is a compilation of Sri Bhagavan's sayings by Sadhu Natanananda.

It is certain that by the power of the nectarine words of Bhagavan Sri Maharshi contained in this work, faith in the Lord will increase and struggling souls enabled to free themselves from all kinds of misery and attain the supreme bliss of the final beatitude.

PUBLISHER.

## Ambapali: A Courtesan who Ascended to Sainthood

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

**A**MBAPALI is held in reverence in the Buddhist world. It was because of Ambapali's good *karma* in previous lives that she was reborn as a contemporary of the Buddha. Superficially, hers looked like a pleasant and exciting life but, in reality, it was a deeply troubled one. She showed us the truth that everybody has the innate capacity to transcend the depths of depravity and ascend to the very summit of the mountain of spirituality. Her life story is fascinating. Why did this wealthy and renowned beauty, who had been enjoying the love and companionship of aristocrats and princes, get very sick and tired of her sorrowful enslavement to the *samsaric* cycle of births and deaths?

Whenever a human being with an immoral past becomes a saint it is a cause for great rejoicing. The news about such a rare event is so inspiring since such a fundamental inner metamorphosis holds out hope for all seekers.

Ambapali was born in the famous city of Vaisali, the capital of the kingdom of the aristocratic and affluent Lichchavis who were not only powerful but also proud. We associate the name of the Buddha with Vaisali because the Enlightened One visited this place several times and spent his last retreat in a nearby village.

Once a gardener of a Lichchavi ruler discovered a baby girl lying under an *amba* (mango) tree. Naturally the infant was called Ambapali. 'Mango-girl' soon became her nickname.

According to tradition, Ambapali had no human parents but came into existence spontaneously. In bygone lives she had not only striven after spiritual perfection but had even been a nun, having entered the Order during the ministry of a previous Buddha called Sikhi. Disgusted with birth by means of parents, she was very keen on spontaneous rebirth wherein there is no external human agency whatsoever. That was exactly what took place in her final reincarnation. The gardener who brought the child to the city might not have known about the mysterious circumstances surrounding her birth. Probably the man regarded her as a mere helpless foundling.

It is difficult to provide a simple explanation of her spontaneous origin. All explanations are the product of our fallible minds. Man makes theories, only to become enslaved by them. Some questions are probably beyond the capacity of the mind to understand. Nevertheless, let us investigate this strange happening. Theists might argue that certain events *seem* to happen accidentally. They say that this is only an appearance, since they

are all in actual fact preordained by an unseen omnipotent Being. Others might maintain that the workings of thought are not at all mysterious but comprehensible to those who understand the law of *karma*. Ambapali's strong-willed determination to be reborn in a specified manner was so powerful that it was fulfilled. The *karmic* seed that she had sown in a former life simply germinated in a subsequent one.

With the passage of time the girl blossomed into a young woman of great charm and beauty. Soon she became the darling of the rich and famous. Powerful and privileged men wooed her. When some of the Lichchavi princes eagerly desired to marry Ambapali, hoping thereby to have exclusive possession of her, it resulted in bitterness, conflicts and fighting.

The theme of men fighting over a woman, which is as old as the hills, inspired Homer's *Iliad* of classical times. The kidnapping of Sita by Ravana, the demon, is central to the plot of Valmiki's masterpiece of religious literature, the *Ramayana*. But as far as we know, no prince dared to take Ambapali away, using force. Yet they importuned her with offers of marriage.

The princes tried hard to settle their dispute by peaceful negotiation. Apparently their efforts were depressing and frustrating because of their competing claims to the sole possession of her. We do not know if Ambapali herself had had any say in this matter, but these tactful men handled the delicate situation with considerable diplomatic skill. They decided to use her equally between them! Soon the damsel was not exactly a common prostitute but a respectable courtesan who was dispensing sexual favours only to those who were considered socially superior.

Ambapali was not after all such a bad woman because her philanthropic disposition and compassion prompted her to make considerable donations of her wealth to charitable causes. This particular detail is noteworthy since the virtue of *dana* (liberality in almsgiving) is the first in the list of ten *paramita* (perfections or qualities) that lead to the supreme state of Buddhahood. It is possible to whittle away the ego's urge to cling to things by parting with one's treasured possessions.

One of Ambapali's distinguished friends was King Bimbisara of Magadha. He is remembered as the first of the kings who served and supported the Buddha. Once when the king asked the great sage where he would like to reside, the Buddha specified that it should be a pleasant and secluded place that is neither crowded during the day nor too noisy at night. It must also be airy with a minimum of noise wherein it would be possible to live in privacy. Thereupon the king donated to the Buddha his Bamboo Grove with many shady trees. Later in this tranquil Veluvanarama park the Buddha spent several rainy seasons.

After meeting the famed beauty in person, even the good King Bimbisara, despite his righteousness and nobility of mind, succumbed to the temptation to make love to her.

Consequently, Ambapali gave birth to a son. The narrative needs to be interrupted now but it will be resumed later.

While going on his final journey with a large number of monks, the Buddha resided temporarily at Vaisali. He stayed at Ambapali's Mango Grove and gave an address to his retinue of monks. "Be mindful and thoughtful, O *bhikkus*," he declared, "whatever you do, always have an alert mind. At all times be watchful when you are eating or drinking, walking or standing, sleeping or being awake, talking or remaining silent."

The news that the Buddha was staying in her Mango Grove made Ambapali extremely happy. Who would not take this unexpected visit from so exalted a sage as a great blessing? Wearing a simple dress without any jewellery, she approached the Buddha and respectfully sat near his feet. It is reported that the Buddha thought to himself as follows, "This woman's heart is tranquil and composed, in spite of her earthly friends and the kings and princes who treat her with special kindness. This maiden is thoughtful and steadfast, although she associates with pleasure-loving persons. How rare she is! This wise woman of true piety has the capacity for understanding the Truth in its entirety, despite her life of luxury." Thereafter he preached her a sermon. Her face lit up as she listened to the *Dharma*, the liberating teachings of the Enlightened One. "May I have the honour," said Ambapali, "of inviting you and the monks for a meal in my home tomorrow?" The Buddha indicated his consent by being quiet.

The Lichchavi princes heard that Ambapali was going to have the privilege of entertaining the Buddha in her own home. They reacted to this piece of news in an envious and resentful way. After dressing up in all their finery, the princes mounted their beautiful carriages and proceeded to meet the Buddha in person. But Ambapali in her carriage drove up against them. The two parties confronted each other. "Ambapali!" they pleaded, "we will give you one hundred thousand gold coins if you allow us to play host to the Blessed One. Let him be our guest instead of yours."

"No, my lords," replied Ambapali, "even if you give me the whole of Vaisali and all its territory, I will still not forego this great honour." Feeling disappointed but not defeated, the Lichchavi princes then went to meet the Buddha himself. They felt very happy when the master delivered a religious discourse. Next the princes invited him for a meal at their palace. "I have already promised to be Ambapali's guest," said the Buddha, declining their request. On returning home, the princes were complaining that they had been outdone by a mere mundane maid!

Taking his begging bowl with him and accompanied by monks, the Buddha went to Ambapali's residence early in the morning. She served them with sweet rice and cakes and various kinds of good food that had been prepared in her own park. After the meal was over Ambapali took a low seat beside him and declared, "Lord, I present this Mango Grove to the community of monks that is headed by the Buddha." He accepted the gift and gave her spiritual instructions.

We have referred to the baby boy who was born in consequence of King Bimbisara's liaison with Ambapali. This son became not only the monk Wimala Kondanna but also an *Arhat*. It was after listening to an inspiring sermon preached by this great son of hers that Ambapali decided to enter the order of nuns and she subsequently became an *Arhat* herself. It is ironic indeed that the very human being who came into existence because of Ambapali's sexual promiscuity was indirectly instrumental in her own Liberation from the shackles of *samsara* and *karma*.

What precipitated her attainment of *Nirvana*? She took as her subject of meditation the perishable nature of her physical organism.

After hearing a discourse by her son, the *Arhat*, Wimala Kondanna, Ambapali decided not only to become a nun but also to meditate on the transient nature of her body. This *sadhana* helped her to understand the law of impermanence (*Anicca*).

Although the consensus of opinion is that this particular spiritual practice was the immediate reason and the single most important factor in her attainment of Liberation, one should not ignore the fact that she had been preparing for this Freedom in her previous lives. There is usually a long chain of *karmic* causes leading to the penultimate stage before Enlightenment. It was her good *karma* of previous lives that enabled her to be reborn as a contemporary of the Buddha and benefit from contact with the Master. Even the son she bore became a disciple of the Buddha and subsequently blossomed into an *arhat*. It is debatable whether it was the Buddha or her son who served as the catalyst for her inner transformation, but on the other hand it can be argued that it was nothing but her own assiduously practised *sadhana* that precipitated her *Nirvana*. Questions as to *why* some succeed or fail in the spiritual quest are difficult to answer, but suffice it to say that these riddles are probably beyond the ken of man.

In the following excerpts from *The Songs of the Sisters* by Usula P. Wijesuriya, which consists of adaptations of *Theri Gatha* or *Psalms of the Sisters*, one can hear the voice of Ambapali who contemplates, among other subjects, the ephemeral nature of her once enchanting body:

Many aeons ago, in the time of Buddha Sikhi,  
 Ambapali was an elder nun in his order.  
 She and the sisters were paying homage to the Bodhi  
 When one sneezed, spraying spittle on the tree.  
 "Which whore did that?" demanded Pali,  
 Maligning the noble sisterhood.  
 She paid for this insult birth after birth,  
 In the guise of a courtesan, desired but cheap.

In the time of Buddha Gautama  
 She appeared 'neath a mango tree,  
 Her glory surpassing the proud sun at dawn,  
 Her grace — the swans or woodland fawn;  
 For she had wished in many past lives  
 That she be of no mother born.  
 Her suitors outnumbered bees on honeyed blooms  
 Or the leaves on her mango tree,  
 Until the king decreed that she  
 Would be the hired plaything of the realm.  
 Her only son, Wimala Kondanna by name,  
 Followed the Buddha and graced the yellow robe.  
 He came to tell his mother the selfless love he'd known  
 And bid her follow him to the Lord.

Ambapali — the love goddess of the state  
 Approached the Buddha, whose compassionate gaze  
 Stirred her, as no sensual gaze of prince or merchant  
 Ever did. And she on her knees prayed  
 "May I be of your order — dressed in rough shroud robe?  
 Accept my mango grove, oh sire,  
 May it be a haven for such as me  
 Who at last has learnt that life's a dream."

Sister Ambapali sat in rapt contemplation.  
 Of the change the thievish years had wrought  
 On her once dazzling beauty — and of her power  
 To lure prince and pauper in the wiles of love.

Years ago my hair was lustrous black,  
 Framing my face in tasseled curls.  
 Today it hangs like limp and listless hemp  
 The Buddha's truth of impermanence is here.

There was a day, when my hair  
 Dressed in perfumes and flowers,

Combed to silken perfection,  
 Trained with jewelled pins,  
 Lured the mighty of this land.  
 But now — the musty smell of age  
 Pervades it. The thick locks gone.  
 And rats' tails would a comparison make.

There was a day — when poets sang  
 To my rainbow eyebrows. When artists dreamed  
 Of their perfect arch.  
 Today they squiggle in a myriad wrinkles  
 Over forehead, cheek and chin.

What dimmed the lustre in my limpid eyes?  
 Where went the youthful nose so delicate and fine?  
 My ear lobes adorned with golden drops and beads  
 Now reduced to bone and shrivelled skin.

There was a day when my white and sparkling teeth  
 Smiled alluringly on princes of the realm,  
 But who would greet me now  
 Gap-toothed and yellow, like a broken fence?

My voice outdid the nightingale's  
 Love songs on moonlit nights;  
 But now it quavers, querulous and old.  
 Can I but speak — to tell you all I've learnt.

My graceful neck — the wild swans envied me,  
 Rivalled the smoothness of conches on sea beds.  
 Today, wrinkled and bent  
 I croak my message. This is the inevitable truth.  
 My arms so molded — alabaster smooth were they,  
 Now like withered stalks they hang.  
 My hands — smooth, soft, adorned with rings,  
 Claws of decrepit birds to mem'ry brings.

My rounded breasts, so firm, so soft, so full,  
 Swan like uplifted, claimed proud womanhood.  
 Now hang they empty between the ribs  
 Like strainers when the sap is fled.

My body — golden hued and warm,  
 Now a mass of scales and flabid flesh.  
 My thighs, once likened to elephant trunks  
 Are no more than crushed and splintered sugarcane.

Where are my ankles which danced to tinkling tunes  
 Drawn from jewelled anklets and silver bells.  
 Where are my feet — soft as silken pads  
 Now cracked and palsied. I painfully limp.

Such is this form, that age will surely spoil,  
 Such is fleeting beauty, pillaged by creeping years  
 Moving on silent feet.

This body, once the envy of the land  
 Is no more than a house of clay with peeling walls.  
 Sister Ambapali reached realisation one day  
 Absorbing all knowledge through the threefold way,  
 Non-returner was she, before her days were done,  
 Temptress of an empire — *Nibbana* won.

Instead of making vain attempts to speculate about the Imperishable, Buddhists try to understand the fact that they are strongly attached to perishable things. While meditating on their sad plight, they realise that it is their craving for the perishable that prevents them from realising the Imperishable. One cannot think about the Imperishable. Neither can it be sought after nor invited.

Buddhist philosophers have wisely avoided trying to describe *Nirvana*. Is it really possible to describe it with anything like accuracy? Any description of *Nirvana* will only remain a mass of meaningless words, except for *Arhats* who have actually attained that exalted state. Seeing the impossibility of conveying the details of his attainment, the Buddha approached the question negatively by stating what *Nirvana* is not. "That abode," declared the Buddha, "is unborn, uncreated, unmanifested and unconditioned."

Is there anything in the entire universe that never changes and lasts forever? Even the sun and stars will some day burn themselves out. Is there any living being that is not subject to decay and death? All things and all beings have a transitory nature and hence are impermanent. Only the truth relating to impermanency is permanent. Ambapali perfectly comprehended the doctrine of *Anicca* (impermanence).

Not only the external world but also the inner world of consciousness is caught up in a whirlpool of ceaseless alteration. Past memories, thoughts, feelings and sensations keep vying with one another to rise to the surface. Thoughts come and go with lightning speed so that it is extremely difficult to keep pace with even a few of them. The constituent elements of consciousness race across the substratum of pure awareness, creating in the process the illusion of 'mind'. The bundle of thoughts, collectively taken, give the fictitious impression that there is such a definite and concrete thing as the mind.

Just as illusory as the concept of 'mind' is the concept of 'I'. Whereas both 'mind' and 'I' appear to exist, in actual fact they are made up of different elements. 'Mind' and 'I' are only aggregations which by themselves have no real and independent existence.

According to the doctrine of *Anatta* (no-self), there is no permanent self-existing ego either within the ever-changing bodily and mental phenomena or outside them. This teaching is closely related to the above-mentioned principle of *Anicca* (impermanence). Since the ego is only a temporary grouping together of attributes, it does not actually exist in itself. There is a popular Buddhist maxim that there are in fact only bad qualities, but not bad people. The feeling 'I am' or 'I exist' is the prime cause of our *samsaric* bondage. We are foolishly inclined to believe that the 'I' is the doer; that it is the 'I' that suffers; that the 'I' treats others kindly or unkindly; that the 'I' is reborn after death; and finally, that the 'I' finds Liberation.

This doctrine has been clearly explained in the Buddhist classic *Visuddhi Magga* (*Path of Purity*):

There is suffering but no sufferer;  
There are deeds but no doer of deeds;  
*Nirvana* is, but not one who enters it;  
The path is, but no traveller thereto.

*Anatta* or egolessness is the central teaching of Buddhism. Whereas many Buddhist teachings can be found in other philosophies and religious systems, this particular doctrine is the distinguishing feature of Buddhism. Consequently, the Buddha has been called the *Anattavadi* or Teacher of Impersonality.

Now, Ambapali's painful awareness that her body was no longer sexually attractive and aesthetically beautiful enabled her to have practical experience of the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*); by contemplating the distressingly shocking changes that her once-charming body had undergone, the law of impermanence (*Anicca*) dawned upon

her; and ultimately, her crowning understanding that there was absolutely nothing within her entire body or mind that did not fade away and die, made it possible for Ambapali to grasp the profound truth relating to no-self or egolessness (*Anatta*). She saw with great clarity that everything within her whole body and mind must sooner or later end up in nothingness for nothing is permanent. Thus the imperishable peace of *Nirvana* came by Ambapali.

It is a truism that the only thing certain in life is death. That man is mortal is a distressing fact of life that we have to come to terms with sooner or later. Has anyone achieved the state of physical immortality? Although it is possible to prolong life, as every intelligent person should, through having the right diet and practising *hatha yoga*, including *pranayama*, has any human being ever succeeded in escaping from the jaws of death? As soon as we leave the womb we are destined to the tomb, and during the intervening period the inexorable process of decaying and ageing keeps going on from moment to moment. Why then do people nowadays want to disguise their decrepitude by undergoing expensive cosmetic surgery? Why bother using any make-up? Why this desire to decorate this dirty and dying lump of flesh and bones?

Buddhists who are serious, strive to free themselves from attachment to their bodies. They practise *The Meditation on the Five Components of the Body*, understanding that the body is just a temporary conglomeration of separate constituent elements that can all fall apart at any moment and result in death:

Matter is similar to a lump of foam,  
Sensations are comparable to bubbles.  
Perception is analogous to a mirage,  
Mental factors are somewhat the same as a banana plant  
And consciousness is like an illusion.

Much in the same vein, they also practise *Meditation on the Impurities of the Body*, realising that genuine renunciation of the world consists in freedom from bodily cravings:

This body of mine consists of hair of my head, hair of my body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, excrement, brain, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, lymph, tears, serum, saliva, nasal mucous, synovial fluid and urine.

Much more precious than skin-deep beauty is the inner beauty of saints who have cast aside their egos. Thus purified, they have found freedom from resentments. Untroubled by negative thoughts and emotions that originate in fear, worry, anger, jealousy, hatred, malice, violence or spite, they radiate an elusive beauty that has an ethereal quality. No words can describe the immense beauty and inner peace that radiated from Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's austere face and eyes. Deep was his absorption in the Eternal. Being so detached from mundane matters, he most probably considered his external appearance too trivial.

The early Christians were remarkable in that they shunned the things of the world and led extremely simple lives. It is significant that they were not outward-looking but inward-looking. Why did Jesus denounce the teachers of the law and the Pharisees? Let us reflect deeply upon the following resounding rebuke from Jesus: "You are similar to whitewashed tombs that appear beautiful on the outside but on the inside you are full of the bones of dead men and everything that is unclean".<sup>1</sup>

The advent of old age can be painfully unbearable for the vain, especially for famously beautiful actors, dancers or film stars who were once the cynosure of admiring and eager eyes. Looking back with nostalgia to their early years, they regret that they are no longer in the limelight. Some of them, alas, have even chosen to commit suicide instead of accepting the fact that their bodies and faces are no longer smooth and charming but rather wrinkled. They have needlessly suffered and paid dearly for their vanity. Nevertheless, inner peace and joy would surely have been theirs had they only ceased to pride themselves on their outward appearance, which in turn would have been the natural consequence of understanding the great and fundamental law of impermanence (*Anicca*). That all constituted things are in a state of perpetual flux or continual change is a cardinal feature in Buddhism.

There are two main reasons for modern man's moral and spiritual degeneracy: first, the growing popularity of the materialist view of life, according to which there is no spiritual world whatsoever since the only reality is physical matter; second, the hedonistic attitude that pleasure is the highest good which alone has ultimate value. In a sense our so-called civilisation has been nothing more than a desperate search for different degrees and forms of pleasure. So great is the emphasis on pleasure that, needless to say, people have become very attached to their bodies. One unfortunate consequence is that they seldom, if ever, ask themselves the following questions: *Am I this body? Why am I attached to it? Is there nothing other than this physical organism with its never-ending, ever-changing chain of thoughts and emotions?*

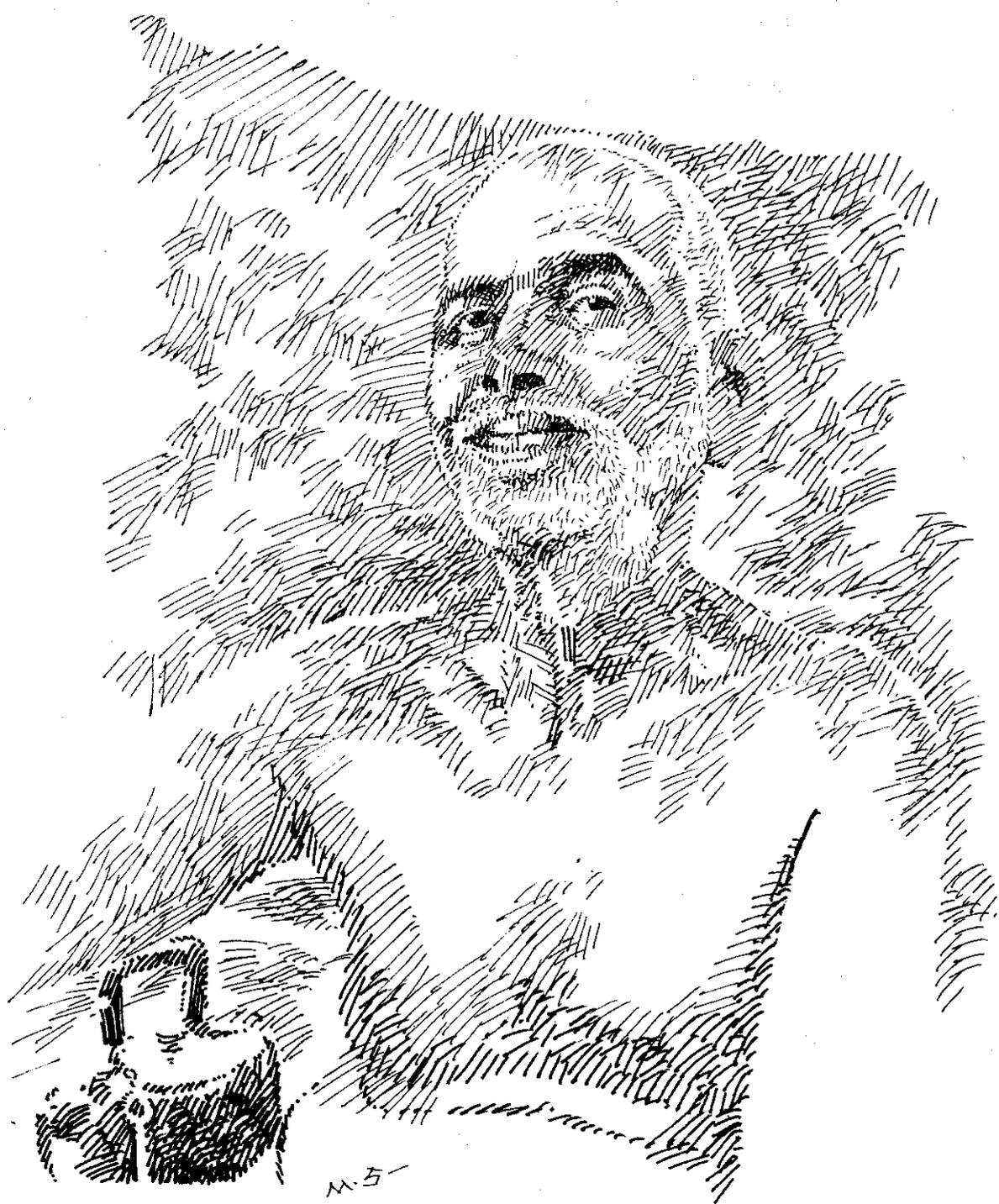
In the *Apadana* one can find a victorious declaration attributed to Ambapali:

By treading the Buddha's path  
I've found the indestructible state.  
A real daughter of him am I.

I remember my past lives,  
Pure is the superhuman eye.  
Being thoroughly cleansed within,  
There is no more becoming.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 23:27.



M. S.

## Ribhu Gita

*The Ribhu Gita which forms Part VI of the epic Siva Rahasya contains the teaching imparted by Siva to Sage Ribhu on the slopes of Mount Kailasa. This teaching of Siva was conveyed in turn by Ribhu to Nidagha and other tapasvins at Kedara.*

*Sri Bhagavan often referred to the Ribhu Gita. He observed that its recitation itself amounts to being in samadhi. In particular he commended the study of Chapter XXVI.*

*We present here a translation of this chapter from the Tamil text (which is a rendering of the Sanskrit original).*

*Once, in reply to a question from a devotee, Maharshi explained the significance of the concepts 'I' and 'you' with the aid of a story concerning Ribhu and Nidagha. The relevant passage from Maharshi's Gospel (Book II, Chapter I) is reproduced below.*

*We also present here a group of six verses selected by Sri Bhagavan from Chapter V of the Ribhu Gita.*

### From Maharshi's Gospel (II.1)

**Devotee:** *Instead of enquiring 'Who am I', can I put the question to myself 'Who are you', since then, my mind may be fixed on You whom I consider to be God in the form of guru. Perhaps, I would be nearer the goal of my quest by that enquiry than by asking myself 'Who am I?'*

**Maharshi:** *Whatever form your enquiry may take, you must finally come to the one 'I', the Self.*

*All these distinctions made between the 'I' and 'you', master and disciple, are merely a sign of one's ignorance. The 'I' Supreme alone is. To think otherwise is to delude oneself.*

*A puranic story of Sage Ribhu and his disciple Nidagha, is particularly instructive in this context.*

## THE STORY OF RIBHU AND NIDAGHA

**A**LTHOUGH Ribhu taught his disciple the supreme truth of the One *Brahman* without a second, Nidagha, in spite of his erudition and understanding, did not get sufficient conviction to adopt and follow the path of *jnana*, but settled down in his native town to lead a life devoted to the observance of ceremonial religion.

But the sage loved his disciple as deeply as the latter venerated his master. In spite of his age, Ribhu would himself go to his disciple in the town, just to see how far the latter had outgrown his ritualism. At times the sage went in disguise, so that he might observe how Nidagha would act when he did not know that he was being observed by his master.

On one such occasion Ribhu, who had put on the disguise of a village rustic, found Nidagha intently watching a royal procession. Unrecognized by the town dweller Nidagha, the village rustic enquired what the bustle was all about, and was told that the king was going in procession. "Oh! It is the king. He goes in procession! But where is he?" asked the rustic.

"There, on the elephant", said Nidagha.

"You say the king is on the elephant. Yes, I see the two" said the rustic, "but which is the king and which is the elephant?"

"What!" exclaimed Nidagha, "you see the two but do not know that the man above is the king and the animal below is the elephant? Where is the use of talking to a man like you?"

"Pray, be not impatient with an ignorant man like me", begged the rustic. "But you said 'above' and 'below', what do they mean?"

Nidagha could stand it no more. "You see the king and the elephant, the one *above* and the other *below*. Yet you want to know what is meant by 'above' and 'below'?" burst out Nidagha. "If things seen and words spoken convey so little to you, action alone can teach you. Bend forward, and you will know it all too well."

The rustic did as he was told. Nidagha got on his shoulders and said, "Know it now. I am *above* as the king, you are *below* as the elephant. Is that clear enough?"

"No, not yet", was the rustic's quiet reply. "You say you are above like the king, and I am below like the elephant. The 'king', the 'elephant', 'above' and 'below', so far it is clear. But pray, tell me what you mean by *I* and *you*?" When Nidagha was thus confronted all of a sudden with the mighty problem of defining the 'You' apart from the 'I', light dawned on his mind. At once he jumped down and fell at his master's feet saying, "Who else but my venerable Master, Ribhu, could have thus drawn my mind from the superficialities of physical existence to the true Being of the Self? Benign Master, I crave thy blessings."

## Chapter XXVI

### Inhering in the Undifferentiated and Non-dual Reality

1. I shall now expound to you the method of inhering in the all-inclusive and undifferentiated Reality. This teaching is secret and difficult to understand with the help of the *Vedas* and other scriptures. Even *devas* and *yogis* who hold it dear acquire it only with great difficulty. Follow what I say and, inhering in Reality, be happy.

2. My son! Realised sages say that absolute inherence in Reality means becoming one with the immutable, tranquil and non-dual *Brahman* which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and the Self of all, and making the wandering mind one with it like the proverbial milk and water, absolutely free from all concepts.

3. When one scrutinises this variety of manifestation one realizes that it does not really exist and that everything is the undifferentiated Supreme *Brahman* which is not different from the *Atman* and oneself. Let this knowledge become firm with you by constant practice. Then, discarding everything, become one with the Supreme *Brahman* and, remaining as that, be happy.

4. Abide as That which does not, when scrutinized, show any duality in the form of these various objects or the least trace of cause and effect; that in which, when the mind is absorbed in it, there is no fear of duality at all — and be always happy, unshakeable and free from the fear arising from duality.

5. Abide as That in which there are neither thoughts nor fancies, neither peace nor

self-control, neither the mind nor the intellect, neither confusion nor certainty, neither being nor non-being and no perception of duality — and be always happy, unshakeable and absolutely free from the fear arising from duality.

6. Abide as That in which there is neither any defect nor good quality, neither pleasure nor pain, neither thought nor silence, neither misery nor austerities,<sup>1</sup> no 'I am the body' idea, no objects of perception whatsoever — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

7. Abide as That in which there is no work, physical, mental, verbal or of any other kind, neither sin nor virtue, neither attachment nor its consequences — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

8. Abide as That in which there are neither thoughts nor a thinker, neither the arising nor the preservation nor the dissolution of the world, nothing whatsoever at any time — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

9. Abide as That in which there is neither *maya* nor its effects, neither knowledge, nor ignorance, neither *jiva* nor *Isvara*, neither being nor non-being, neither world nor God — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

<sup>1</sup> Which are practised for getting rid of misery.

10. Abide as That in which there are no gods and their worship, none of the three gods<sup>2</sup> or meditation on them, no Supreme Siva nor meditation on Him — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

11. Abide as That in which there is neither maturing *karma* nor *bhakti* nor *jnana*, no fruit of action to be enjoyed, no supreme state separate from it, no means of attainment or object to be attained — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

12. Abide as That in which there is neither body nor senses nor vital forces, neither mind nor intellect nor fancy, neither ego nor ignorance, nor anyone who identifies himself with them, neither the macrocosm nor the microcosm — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

13. Abide as That in which there is neither desire nor anger, neither greed nor delusion, neither ill-will nor pride, no impurities of mind and no false notions of bondage and liberation — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

14. Abide as That in which there is no beginning or end, no top or bottom or middle, no holy place or god, no gifts or pious acts, no time or space, no objects of perception — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

15. Abide as That in which there are none of the four spiritual qualifications,<sup>3</sup> no competent *guru* or disciple, no steady knowledge, no realized stage, no liberation of either kind,<sup>4</sup> nothing whatsoever at any time — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

16. Abide as That in which there are no *Vedas* or other scriptures, no one who thinks, no objection or answer to it, no theory to be established, no theory to be rejected, nothing other than one Self — and be always happy, free from (without) the least trace of thought.

17. Abide as That in which there is no debate, no success or failure, no word or its meaning, no speech, no difference between the *jiva* and the Supreme Being, none of the manifold adjuncts — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

18. Abide as That in which there is no need for hearing, etc.,<sup>5</sup> no *samadhi* to be practised, no differences of the same kind (*sajatiya*) or of a different kind (*vijatiya*) or within itself (*pragata*), no words or their meanings — and be always happy, free from the least trace of thought.

19. Abide as That in which there is no fear of hell (*naraka*), no joys of heaven (*svarga*), no worlds of Brahma or the other gods, nor any object to be gained from them, no other world, no universe of any kind — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

<sup>2</sup> Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Siva the Destroyer.

<sup>3</sup> (a) Discrimination between the real and the unreal, (b) Absence of desire for the joys of this world as well as the next, (c) Possession of the six virtues like sense-control, mind-control etc., (d) Yearning for liberation.

<sup>4</sup> Liberation while still alive and liberation after death.

<sup>5</sup> Hearing (*sravana*), reflecting (*manana*) and practising (*nididhyasana*).

20. Abide as That in which there is nothing of the elements nor even an iota of their derivatives, no sense of 'I' or 'mine', no fantasies of the mind, no blemish of attachment, no concept whatsoever — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

21. Abide as That in which there are none of the three kinds of bodies,<sup>6</sup> none of the three kinds of states,<sup>7</sup> none of the three kinds of *jivas*,<sup>8</sup> none of the three kinds of afflictions,<sup>9</sup> none of the five kinds of sheaths,<sup>10</sup> no one to identify himself with them — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

22. Abide as That in which there is no sentient object, no power to hide Reality,<sup>11</sup> no difference of any kind, no power of projecting unreal objects,<sup>12</sup> no power of any other kind, no false notion about the world — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

23. Abide as That in which there are no sense organs or anyone to use them, that in which transcendent bliss is experienced, that which is absolutely immediate, that by realizing and attaining which one becomes immortal, that by becoming which one does not return to this cycle of births and deaths — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

24. Abide as That, on realizing which and experiencing the bliss of which, all joys appear to be the joys of That, that, on clearly knowing which to be oneself, there is nothing apart from oneself, and all kinds of *jivas* become liberated — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

25. Abide as That, on realizing which to be oneself, there is nothing else to be known, everything becomes already known and every purpose accomplished — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

26. Abide as That which is attained easily when one is convinced that one is *Brahman*, that which results, when that conviction becomes firm, in the experience of the supreme bliss of *Brahman*, that which produces a sense of incomparable and complete satisfaction when the mind is absorbed in it — and be always happy without the least trace of thought.

27. Abide as That which leads to the complete cessation of misery when the mind is absorbed in it, and the extinction of all ideas of 'I', 'you' and 'he' and the disappearance of all differences — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

28. Abide as That in which, when the mind is absorbed in It, one remains without a second, nothing other than oneself is seen to exist and incomparable bliss is experienced — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

<sup>6</sup> The physical, the mental and the causal.

<sup>7</sup> Waking, dreaming and sleeping.

<sup>8</sup> Those who are fully eligible to advance spiritually, those who are not so eligible and those who are not at all eligible.

<sup>9</sup> Afflictions of the body, afflictions caused by the gods and afflictions caused by the elements.

<sup>10</sup> The physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual and the blissful.

<sup>11</sup> *Avarana Sakti*.

<sup>12</sup> *Vikshepa Sakti*.

29. Abide as That which is undifferentiated Existence, undifferentiated consciousness, undifferentiated bliss, absolutely non-dual, the undifferentiated *Brahman* and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

30. Abide as That which is 'I' as well as 'you' as well as everyone else, is the basis of all, is one without anything else whatsoever, is extremely pure, the undifferentiated Whole and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

31. Abide as That in which there are no concepts or anything else whatsoever, the ego ceases to exist, all desires disappear, the mind becomes extinct and all confusions come to an end and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

32. Abide as That in which there is no awareness of the body etc. and no perception of objects, that in which the mind is dead, the *jiva* becomes one with the Reality, thoughts are dissolved and even one's convictions no longer hold and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

33. Abide as That in which there is no longer any *dhyana* or *yoga* or ignorance or knowledge or activities of any kind, that which is the Supreme Reality and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

34. Abide as That in which, when one is completely merged with it, one experiences pure bliss, never experiences misery, sees nothing, does not take birth again, never thinks oneself to be a separate individual, becomes the Supreme Being and with the

conviction that you are That, be always happy.

35. Abide as That which is truly the Supreme *Brahman*, the Supreme Siva, the absolutely pure Being, the Supreme State, absolute consciousness, the Supreme Truth and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

36. Abide as That which is the absolutely pure Supreme Being, absolute bliss, the supremely subtle Being, the Self-Effulgent, non-dual and undifferentiated one and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

37. Abide as That which is absolute truth, supreme tranquillity, eternal being, absolutely attributeless, the Self, the absolutely undifferentiated Supreme Being and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

38. Abide as That which is everything from the empirical point of view and nothing from the absolute point of view, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, always tranquil, with nothing separate from it, the self-existent being and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

39. I have thus, O Nidagha, clearly explained to you the state of being one with the Supreme Being. By constantly thinking that you are the undifferentiated Supreme Being, you can attain that state and enjoy constant bliss. Thereafter, having become *Brahman*, you will never experience the misery of *samsara*.

40. "Everything is the Supreme Being which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and I am That": by constantly cultivating

this pure thought, get rid of impure thoughts. Then, my son, discarding even that thought and always inhering in the state of fullness, you will become the non-dual and undifferentiated Supreme Being and attain liberation.

41. Pure and impure thoughts are a feature of the mind. There are no wandering thoughts in the Supreme Being. Therefore abide as That and, free from the pure and impure thoughts of the mind, remain still like a stone or a log of wood. You will then be always happy.

42. By constantly thinking of the undifferentiated Supreme Being and forgetting thereby all thoughts including the thought of the Supreme Being, you will become the all-comprehensive Supreme *Brahman*. Even a great sinner who hears and understands this teaching will get rid of all his sins and become the undifferentiated Supreme Being.

43. The endless *Vedas* have already prescribed meditation for attaining purity of

mind. In order that those who have become pure in mind may easily attain liberation and, realizing that they are absolute and boundless bliss, remain still like a stone in the undifferentiated and all-comprehensive Supreme Siva; the nature of this immaculate state has been expounded by me.

44. Therefore, attaining purity of mind by constantly thinking that everything that is known is Siva and that that Siva is oneself, and thereafter abiding in the state of complete identity with *Brahman*, liberation can be attained here and now. I have spoken the truth. In this manner, Sage Ribhu expounded the state of being all to Nidagha.

45. When one is convinced that one is always that which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and abides as that in a state of complete identity, one casts off the unreal bondage of *samsara* and attains liberation. This is the significance of the highly blissful dance of our Supreme and undifferentiated Lord.

## RIBHU GITA, Chapter V

### Selections by Sri Bhagavan

1. The concept 'I-am-the-body' is the sentient inner organ (i.e. the mind). It is also the illusory *samsara*. It is the source of all groundless fears. If there is no trace of it at all, everything will be found to be *Brahman*. (17)<sup>13</sup>

2. The concept 'I-am-the-body' is the primal ignorance. It is known as the firm knot of the heart (*hridayagranthi*). It gives

rise to the concepts of existence and non-existence. If there is no trace of it at all, everything will be found to be *Brahman*. (19)

3. *Jiva* is a concept. God, the world, the mind, desires, action, sorrow and all other things are all concepts. (25)

<sup>13</sup> The number within brackets indicates the number of the verse as per the full text of Chap. V.

4. The mind is unreal. It is like a magic show. It is like the son of a barren woman. It is absolutely non-existent. Since there is no mind there are no concepts, no Guru, no disciple, no world, no *jiva*. All concepts are really *Brahman*. (36)

5. The body, etc., are only concepts. Hearing, etc. (i.e. hearing, reasoning and contemplating) are concepts. Self-enquiry is a concept. All other things are also

concepts. Concepts give rise to the world, the *jivas* and God. There is nothing whatever except concepts. Everything is in truth *Brahman*. (30)

6. Abiding without concepts is the undifferentiated state. It is inherence (in *Brahman*). It is wisdom. It is Liberation. It is the natural state (*sahaja*). It is *Brahman*. It is Siva. If there is no concept at all everything will be found to be *Brahman*. (26)

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## Recollections

By T.R. Kanakammal

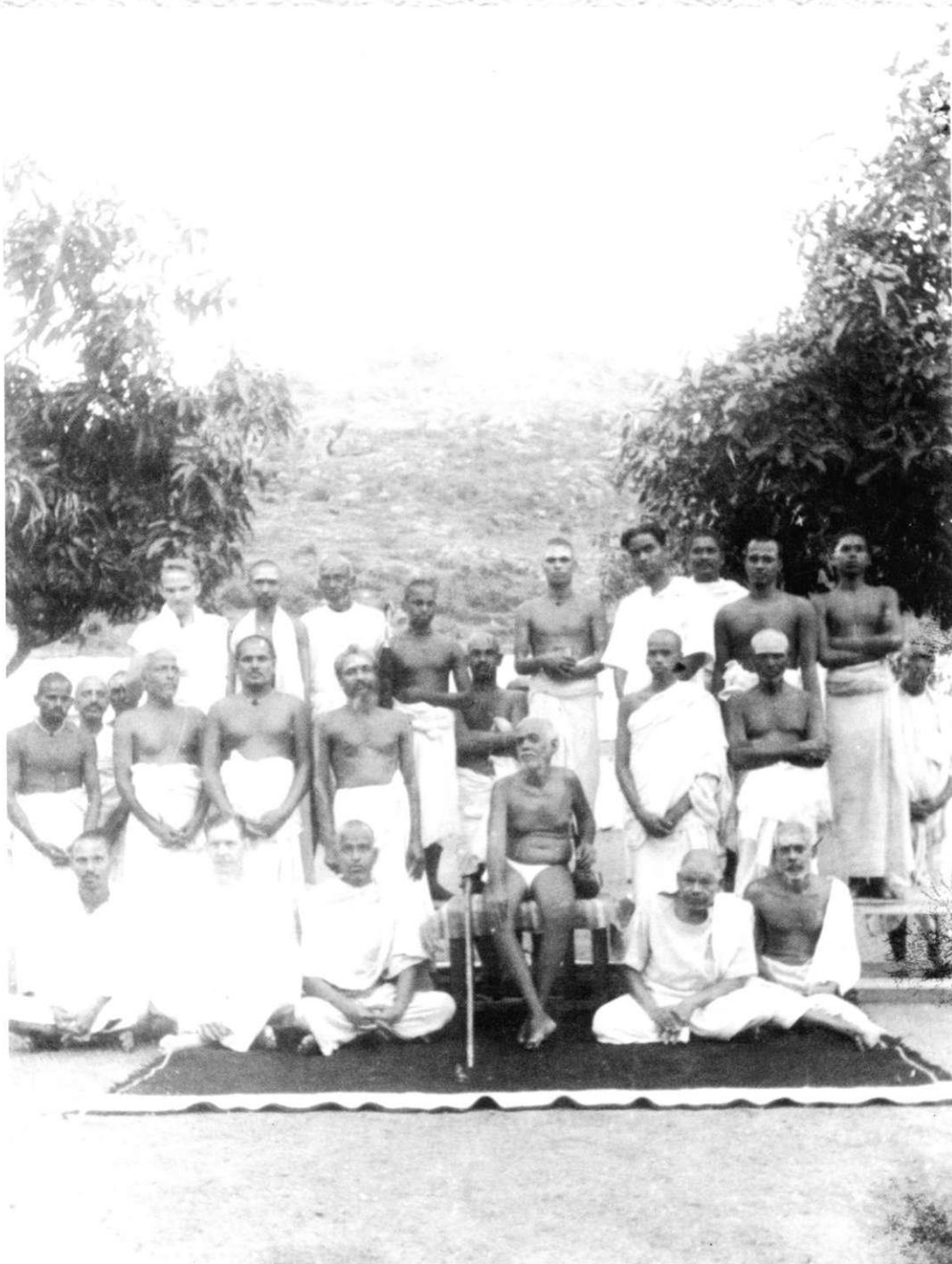
WHEN Bhagavan came to the New Hall in front of the Matrubhuteswara Shrine, a few rigid restrictions had been imposed — that *darshan* could be had only during fixed periods, that no one should sleep in the Hall except the attendants, and that even such attendants should go to sleep in the night at certain hours etc. So, Kodur Venkatratnam, Sub Registrar Narayana Iyer and T.P. Ramachandra Iyer used to offer to be the attendants at night so that they could be in the company of Bhagavan. In those days Bhagavan also talked a lot, irrespective of whether it was day or night. Particularly if he was narrating a story, Bhagavan would enact the entire drama with lively gesticulations.

Sri Niranjanananda Swami was very particular that the attendants did not engage

Bhagavan in conversation and that they lay down quietly. So, he would go round the Hall at regular intervals, peeping through the window in between, to check. Venkatratnam and Narayana Iyer would sit erect and gape at Bhagavan while he dramatised a story. They would entirely forget the environment. Bhagavan would know the incoming danger(!). So, suddenly he would stop telling the story or talking and make signs to them with his hands to lie down; they would obey. After some time when the *Sarvadhikari* had left, Bhagavan would again make signs without a whisper of a sound and the avid listeners would get up! How childlike Bhagavan was!

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From *Moments Remembered*.



**Year not known**

*(First row, sitting)* Left to Right: 1. Annamalai Swamy, 2. Major Chadwick, 3. Niranjanananda Swamy, **4. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**, 5. Seshu Iyer, 6. Sama Thatha.

*(Second row, standing)* Left to Right: 1 to 4. Not identified. 5. Kumaraswamy, 6. Nondi Srinivasa Iyer, 7. (close to Bhagavan) Ranga Rao, 8. Book Stall Dandapani Swami, 9. Danappa Pillai of Rishivandiyam.

*(Third and last row, standing)* Left to Right: 1. Not known, 2. Raja Iyer, 3. Not known, 4. Rangaswamy, 5. Madhava Swamy, 6 and 7. Not known, 8. Subramania Swamy, 9 and 10. Not known

From the Ashram Archives



216 b

*Taken near the thatched shed, the first Ashram structure, circa 1924*

*(First row, sitting) Left to Right: 1, Perumal Swamy, 2. Ramakrishna Swamy, 3. Muruganar,*

***4. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**, 5. Dandapani Swami, 6. Madhava Swamy, 7. Viswanatha Swamy,*

*8. Kumaraguru (father of Subramania Swami.)*

*(Second row, standing) All are unidentified*

2/6 c

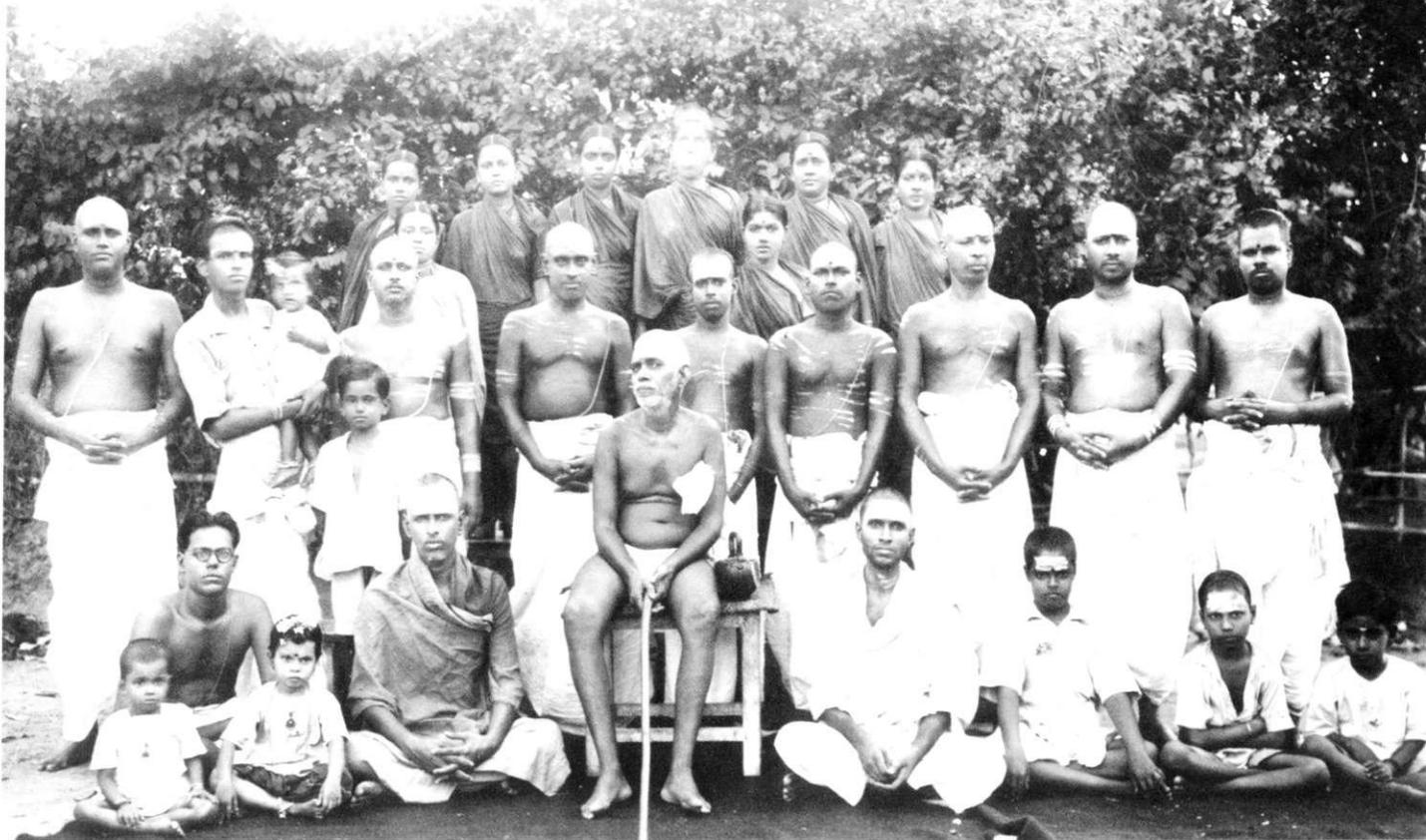
From the Ashram Archives



*Year not known*

*(Sitting)* : **Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.**

*(Standing), Left to right:* 1. Krishnaswamy, Sri Bhagavan's attendant, 2. Shiva Das, 3. Amritananda, 4. Not identified, 5. Kunju Swami.



24.2

**Taken : 1-6-1935**

*(First row, sitting) Left to Right:* 1. Ramani, 2. Gomati, 3. (Immediately behind children): P.R. Subramanian (Photo PRS), 4. Niranjanananda Swamy, **5. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**, 6. Visvanatha Swami, 7. Venkataraman, s/o. Manamadurai Sundaram Iyer, 8. Not Identified, 9. Seramban Venkittu.

*(Second row, standing) Left to Right:* 1. Vakil Sundaram Iyer of Manamadurai, s/o. Subbier, 2. T.N. Venkataraman (now Swami Ramanananda) carrying V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President, 3. (young boy) not identified, 4. Chellam Iyer, 5. Pitchu Iyer, husband of Alamelu Ammal (sister of Sri Bhagavan), 6. Vaidyanathan, 7. Easwaran, 8. Sholavandan Ramaswami Iyer, 9. P.R. Nagasundaram Iyer, 10. Kandanur Rajulu Iyer.

*(Third row, standing) Left to Right:* 1. Anandam, 2. (Behind Chellam Iyer) Lakshmi, 3. Annammal, 4. Lakshmi, 5. Athai (Alamelu Ammal), sister of Sri Bhagavan, 6. Lakshmi Ammal, sister of Nagalakshmi Ammal, 7. Angachi Ammal, 8. Nagalakshmi Ammal.

## Taking the Name of the Lord: How Sri Bhagavan Commended It

*We present below an extract from Talks wherein Sri Bhagavan confirms the efficacy of the Divine Name for achieving realisation.*

*January 3, 1938*

(Talk No. 441)

*Mr. Pannalal, I. C. S., a high Government official from Allahabad, with his wife, a highly cultured lady, and Mr. Brijnarayan, a retired judge, were on a visit for a week. The night previous to their departure they wanted to have their doubt cleared. Their doubt was:*

*We had a great sage for our Guru. He advised us to 'take the name of Hari,' saying that it is all in all; no effort is necessary for concentrating the mind. Concentration will come of itself if Harinam is persisted in. So we are doing it. The Guru passed away. We felt like a rudderless ship in mid-ocean. In our anxiety to find a safe guide we read and heard of you and so desired to come here. Our desire has been fulfilled after two years' longing. On coming here and hearing Sri Bhagavan we understand that the Master teaches Atma vichara (self-quest). This is the method of knowledge (jnana marga), whereas the other master taught us bhakti marga (method of devotion). What shall we do now? Are we to give up the other method and take to this new method? If once we change shall we not change many times more according to the masters we meet? What progress can be made by such frequent changes? Pray remove this doubt and bless us.*

*The Master referred the gentleman to an article [on the philosophy of the Divine Name] in the September number of Vision, a monthly journal issued by the Anandasram, Kanhangad.*

### PHILOSOPHY OF THE DIVINE NAME ACCORDING TO SAINT NAMDEV

The name permeates the entire universe densely; who can tell to what depths in the nether regions and to what height in the heaven It extends?

The ignorant fools undergo the eighty-four lakhs of species of births, not

knowing the essence of things. The Name is immortal. Forms are innumerable but Name is all that.

The Name itself is form and form itself is Name. There is no distinction between Name and form. God became manifest and

assumed Name and form. Hence the Name the *Vedas* have established. Beware, there is no *mantram* beyond the Name. Those who say otherwise are ignorant fools. Name is Keshava Himself. This is known only to the loving devotees of the Lord.

The all-pervading nature of the Name can only be understood when one recognises his own 'I'. When one's own name is not recognised, it is impossible to get all-pervading Name. When one knows oneself then one finds the Name everywhere.

None can realise the Name by the practice of knowledge, meditation or austerity. Surrender yourself at first at the feet of the *Guru* and learn to know who the 'I' in you is. After finding the source of that 'I', merge your individuality in that Oneness — which is Self-existent and devoid of all duality. It is that Name that permeates the three worlds.

The Name is *Paramatman* Itself where there is no action arising out of *dvaita* (duality).

#### REMEMBERING THE LORD

Once upon a time conceit entered into the heart of the divine Sage Narada, and he thought there was no greater devotee than himself. Reading his thought, Lord Sri Vishnu said, "Narada! Go to such and such a place where there is a great *bhakta* of mine, and do you cultivate his acquaintance." Accordingly, Narada went and found only a farmer, who rose early in the morning, pronounced the name of Hari once and taking his plough went out for the day to till the ground. At night after once more saying the name of Hari, he went to bed. "How can this rustic be called a lover of God?" thought Narada to himself. "He is busily engaged in worldly duties, and has no signs of a pious man about him."

The sage then came back to the Lord and told what he thought of his new acquaintance. But the Lord said, "Narada! Take this cup full of oil, go round the city and bring it back to me. But take care that not a drop of the oil falls to the ground." Narada did as he was told, and on his return, the Lord asked, "Well, Narada, how often did you remember Me in your walk?" "Not once, my Lord!" replied Narada. "How could I, when I had to watch this cup, brimming over, as it was, with oil?"

Then said the Lord, "This one cup of oil so diverted your attention then, that you forget me altogether, yet think of that peasant, who, burdened with the heavy load of a family, still remembers Me twice a day."

— *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.*

## Manuscripts of Sri Bhagavan

We reproduce here the following manuscripts which are in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan:

- 1) *Sri Ramana Satakam* (pp. 220-25).
- 2) *Ekatma Panchakam* (p. 226).

*Sri Ramana Satakam*: The title of the Ms. actually means 'Hundred Verses on Sri Ramana'. However, there are only forty verses in the hymn which has accordingly been renamed *Ramana Chatvarimsat* (*Forty Verses on Sri Ramana*) by Sri Bhagavan. Full background information on the evolution of the *Forty Verses* has been provided by K. Natesan in his article (pp. 165-67).

There are blank spaces in the Ms. for the obvious reason that the corresponding verses were not actually received, as anticipated. Five pages left blank (for want of verses) by Sri Bhagavan have not been copied here. With this exception, what appears here is an exact reproduction of the note-book in which Sri Bhagavan wrote down the verses sent to him by Sri Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, from Sirsi.

A translation of the *Forty Verses* is presented between pages 238 and 241.

*Ekatma Panchakam* (Five Verses on the Self): The Malayalam version is presented here.

This is the last original work of Sri Bhagavan. Written in 1947, the original verses are in Telugu, but to a metrical form in Tamil, known as the *venba*.

For the reason that there was already a composition of Shankaracharya named *Atma Panchakam*, Sri Bhagavan gave the title *Ekatma Panchakam* to these verses.

Subsequently Bhagavan translated *Ekatma Panchakam* into Tamil as well as Malayalam, himself.

The Telugu and Tamil versions have already been published in the Jayanti 1998 Issue of *The Mountain Path*.

A translation is furnished on page 241.

श्री  
 ॥ रमणशतकम् ॥

अन्तर्यश्च बहिर्विभ्रूततिमिरं  
 ज्योतिर्मयं शाश्वतं  
 स्थानं प्राप्य विराजते विनमता  
 मज्ञानमुन्मूलयन् ।  
 पश्यन्निश्वसपीदमुल्लसतियो  
 विश्वस्य पारे पर  
 स्तस्मै श्रीरमणाय लोकगुरवे  
 शोकस्य हन्ते नमः ॥ 22



12. एकं वक्त्रं मुमाङ्ग वासविरहः पाणानशक्त्या युषं  
मर्त्यत्वं न पताकिनीच पृतना पार्श्वद्वये नाकिनाम् ।  
वेषोलं पुनरेष मुग्धनयन प्रच्छादने भ्रुजुषा  
मन्तर्धानमुपैषि तारकरिपो कस्तन्यदायादतः ॥२॥१४

13. केचिद्योगविदां पुरस्सरइति प्रज्ञानि बुद्ध्या परे  
साधुः कश्चिदितीतरे गुरुपिया केच्यद्विपन्नं तव ।  
सेवन्ते रमणाभिधानमनुजक्षेमायजातक्षितौ

द्वित्रास्त्वांगिरिजाङ्गपीठनिकयं जानन्ति देवं गुहम् ॥३॥१५

14. ॐकारार्थं मुपादिशो भगवते वाणी मनोहारिणे  
तातायाप्युपदेष्टुमुद्यतमभूत्किंचित्त्वदीयं मुखम् ।  
ज्येष्ठस्याद्यसहोदरस्य गुरुतां प्राप्तो सिद्धी गौरवात्  
सुब्रह्मण्यकनिष्ठतामपि गतस्सर्वाधिकस्त्वं गुरौः ॥४॥१६

15. यत्पूर्वं श्रुतिपारदर्शिषिषणो द्वेषायनोभ्यारुहः  
त्पश्चाद्दोषकलाविधूततिमिरइशंकापहइशंकरः ।  
तस्मिन्प्रत्यस्त्रिकावनीतरुजुषामाचार्यसिंहासने

देवत्वां प्रतिवीक्षते नरतनो गीर्वाणसेनापते ॥५॥ १७

16. धर्मेनाशमुपागते त्रिभुवने पर्याकुले पापतः  
प्रज्ञाने परितो गिरां पथि मुधा संचार्यमाणे जनैः ।

सद्भावे परमेश्वरस्य च पितृस्सन्देहो कांजते  
द्वीपः कंतवमर्त्यके कितुरगत्वा मन्तराकस्सताम् ॥६॥१८

17. वैराग्यं तव वित्तमस्तु करुणां शक्रोषिहातुं कथं  
दृष्यस्तेस्तु समुद्यमः पितृपदभ्याने च किं तादृशम् ।  
कामस्तेस्तु विगर्हितो विनमतां रक्षाच किं गर्हितो  
स्कन्दच्छद्यमनुष्य किञ्चुसमयं कश्चित्समुद्गीक्षसे ॥७॥१९

18. दरं याहि कुवा दधर्मवृषते नैतः परंपगुता  
दुःश्रुतिभुवनं जहीहि परितो वर्धस्व संसत्सताम् ।  
सोदर्येण समन्वितो भुवमिमां प्राप्तो गुरुग्रामणी  
शूरान्तःपुरनेत्रविभ्रमहरो देवो भवानी सुतः ॥८॥ २०

19. जन्मस्थानमवाप्य गुप्तमहमोयो भेदमाधूतवान्  
भूतानां चरतां पृथग्विधपि यामात्मैव यो भासते ।  
देहं सर्वमिदं जगच्च विभ्रवादाक्रम्ययः प्रोक्षस  
त्येकस्ते गुरुमूर्तिमानमतरे लंबोदरभ्रातरम् ॥९॥२१

20. देवीशक्तिरियं दृशोः श्रितजनध्वान्तक्षयापायिनी  
देवी श्रीरियमम्बुजाक्षमहिषी वले सहस्रच्छदे ।  
देवी श्रुतपुरियं विजयते व्याहारगुडापरा

विभ्रवादां यमन भवतस्य तन्मैत्रेयः ॥१०॥ २२

तृतीयं  
॥ हरिणीदशकम् ॥

21. भवजलनिधिं गार्हं गार्हं चिरादकसाकसान्  
पदजलरुहं द्रुं द्रुं पश्रितास्तव संप्रति ।  
रमण भगवन्कल्याणानां निकेतनपाहिज  
स्सदय दयया सिनैर्भक्तानपांग विलोकितेः ॥१॥ 34

22. अदिनजननी स्तन्यं दद्याच्छिशोर्बतकागतिः  
यदिपशुपतिः क्रोधं कुर्यात्पशो रवने कुतः ।  
यदिपदजुषामाचार्यत्वं निहंसिन संशयं

भ्रमशतपराभूतापानेतरन्तु भवं कथम् ॥२॥ 35

23. विशदहसिते पूर्णाशांतिः सुधाकरसौदरे  
स्थिरपशुलयोः पूर्णाशक्तिर्दृशोरतुल्यार्थिजोः ।  
हृदयकमले नित्यानिष्ठा बहिर्भ्रसरप्रभे  
रमण भगवन्को वासोनी समस्तव भूतले ॥३॥ 36

चतुर्थम्

॥ वसन्तिकदशकम् ॥

31. शान्तिर्नितान्तमपिकापरमास्यशक्तिः, वैराग्यमद्भुततमं करुणा तु सान्द्रा ।  
ज्ञानं निरस्तकुहनं मधुरं च वृत्तं, नृणां निदर्शनमयं रमणो महर्षिः ॥१॥ 4

32. तद्भागधेय मसमानमनेकमौनि, वासार्जितं क्षितिभृतः खलु लोहितस्य ।  
अंगीचकार भगवान्नमणो महर्षि, रन्ध्रेषु सत्सु यदि मं बहुषु स्थलेषु ॥२॥ 5

पञ्चमं

॥ नरमनोरमादशकम् ॥

41. प्रसरतादितः शुभविलोकिताम् । रमणते सकृत्, फलतु मेकृतम् ॥१॥२३  
 42. रमणजन्मिना, मयि भवान्गुरुः । अभिद आशय, स्तव महानुरुः ॥२॥२४  
 43. जगदहं परः, स्फुरति मेत्रयम् । सदाभिदं गिरा, तव विसंशयम् ॥३॥२५  
 44. त्वदुपदेशतो, गरुति संविदा । मयि निरन्यथा, सदाहमोर्भेदा ॥४॥२६  
 45. अहमि योऽन्तर, स्तममलंहदि । अनुभवेमभो, स्तवकृपायदि ॥५॥२७  
 46. नकरुणा गुण, स्तवविदां पते । हृदय तेजसः, सहज भवेते ॥६॥ - २८  
 47. तव तनुर्ब्रह्म, त्यन्य वियुता । तव दृगातता, लसति भास्वता ॥६॥ २९  
 48. कलकितं मन, स्तवविभोद्गदा । त्वमसि सन्ततं, विलसितो मुदा ॥६॥३०  
 49. भुवनभूपते, भगवतः कृते । भवसि पाचको, यमवतां पते ॥९॥ ३१  
 50. नरपशुनिमा, नहमि ताडयन् । परशिवोदनं, वितनुषे पचम् ॥१०॥३२

इति पञ्चमं

॥ नरमनोरमादशकम् ॥

षष्ठमं

॥ औपच्छन्दसिकम् दशकम् ॥

51. तिमिराणि न केवलं वचोभिः, करुणा पांग विलोकितां श्यनृणाम् । ३३  
 हृदये प्रससन्ति मर्दयन्तं, भगवन्तरमणं गुरुं नमामि ॥१॥

सप्तमम्

॥ मण्डुभाषिणीदशकम् ॥

61. परदेशिनेव भवकेन वाससः, शककेन वैष्टितकटीविशोभिना ।  
 वरदेशिकेन नरवेषधारिणा, शिखिवाहनेन गुरुमज्जगद्भवेत् ॥१॥ ॥

अष्टमम्

॥ मन्दाक्रान्तादशकम् ॥

71. सोहजातोरमण भ्रगवन्पादयोस्ते द्विविष्टो  
मदप्यस्मिन्महति समये शक्तिलास्ये प्रवृत्ते ।

सूर्यस्यैवज्वलितमहसो दूरगां नाभशक्तिं  
विश्वस्याग्र्यां तवममनो वीतदुःखं तथापि ॥१॥ 38

वसुधाम्

॥ अनुष्टुप्शकम् ॥

81. अतीतगुणजालाय नैष्ठिकब्रह्मचारिणे ।  
नमो माया मनुष्याय गुरवे तारकारये ॥ 12

॥ उपसंहार श्लोकः ॥

नारसिंहि र्गणपति वीसिष्टो रमणं गुरुम् ॥

चत्वारिंश न्मितैः पदैः स्कन्दांशं स्तुतवानृषिम् ॥