“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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>June 2001</th>
<th>Aradhana Issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The World as the Self — Editorial</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Silent Teacher</strong> — His Holiness Swami Swaroopanand (Shankaracharya of Dwaraka Pitha and Jyotirmath)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selections from the <em>Veda</em> (<em>Rig Veda x.117</em>) — Translated by Prof. A.C. Bose</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shankaracharya’s Hymn to Dakshinamurti</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading a Sattvic Life — Dr. Stuart Rose</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pontiff and Sri Bhagavan — T.K. Sundaresha Iyer</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Thoughts on the Practice of Meditation — Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhagavan’s Father — R. Subramaniam</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steadfast Service — Prof. K. Swaminathan</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhvacharya — Raman</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati, Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sarada Pitam — M. Ravindra Narayan</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakshinamurti, Sankara and Ramana — J. Jayaraman</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfishness (Poem) — I.S. Madugula</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachala — Arthur Osborne</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sri Arunachala Mahatmyam</em> (The Glory of Arunachala) — Tr. by M.C. Subramanian</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscripts of Sri Bhagavan</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Linga Pramanya Vakyani</em></td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note the change in telephone numbers

Phone: 37292; 37200
Fax: 0691-4175-37491

**Website:**
http://www.ramana-maharshi.org

**e mail:**
alagamma@vsnl.com
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.

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

- No payment is made for contributions published.

- The editor is not responsible for statements and opinions contained in signed articles.

- Contributions are accepted only on condition that they do not appear elsewhere before being published in The Mountain Path. They can be published later elsewhere but only with acknowledgement to The Mountain Path.

The Mountain Path is dedicated to
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
By sheer force of habit our outlook is exteriorized. We look for events or anticipate developments — outside. We look without, perhaps all the while. Rarely do we look within (ourselves). There are of course strong reasons why the external world means so much and our attention is drawn without, rather than within.

If even ordinary objects or sights of the world fill us with wonder, one need not speak of the influence (on us) of great sceneries or wonders of nature, like the rolling dark-blue oceans, long sea beaches, steep waterfalls or small ones cascading down the mountainside, broad rivers, mountain ranges and their snow-clad peaks, woods, giant trees, flowering plants of extraordinary variety and the like. We are charmed by all this.

There are also man-made wonders like the pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, skyscrapers, massive bridges, ultra-high dams and other feats of engineering. We are certainly charmed by the objects of the world, whether they are natural, or man-made!

Such a huge world or universe, with incessant, multifarious and multitudinous activities going on within it, is a concrete entity. The reality of it seems obvious.

Even from a cursory study of religious texts we are aware that some of the main qualities of the Divine are: omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. Of all these, perhaps the most readily understood characteristic is that of omnipresence. From the *Sruti* and other scriptural texts we know that the cosmos is pervaded by the Divine.

However, there are constant changes in the world. Apart from this, the fact remains that the world which appears during our waking state, disappears during deep sleep. The main test for reality of an entity is that it should be changeless as well as constant or permanent. Applying this criterion, the world cannot be considered real.
The teaching of the *Vedanta* — at least as understood at the popular level — is that the world is unreal. Shankaracharya calls it *mithya* (imaginary, imagined).

Therefore apparently inconsistent views seem to prevail about the status of the world. The basic question then comes up: Is the world real or unreal?

This question has often been raised with Maharshi. Sri Maharshi has given detailed explanations on the subject. His clarification dispels the erroneous impression that Shankaracharya preached the total or absolute unreality of the world.

Some come to wrong conclusions due to a superficial study of the teaching of Acharya. Actually, Shankaracharya's teaching is that the world is a mere appearance posited by *maya*, the mysterious power of Brahman. It appears as if it is different from the Self to the ordinary man. However, on enlightenment, one sees that one alone exists. The Self alone exists. It would then be clear that the world is not different from the Self, even when it is seen. Thus the world has a measure or order of reality which can be called superimposition. It is not totally imaginary like the 'son of a barren woman'.

The following is the report of a typical dialogue with Sri Bhagavan on the subject:

A question arose if the world is real or unreal, since it is claimed to be both by the *advaitins* themselves.

Sri Bhagavan said that it is unreal if viewed as apart from the Self and real if viewed as the Self.\(^1\)

Another dialogue on the question is reproduced below:

**Devotee:** When the *Upanishads* say that all this is Brahman, how can we agree with Shankara that the world is illusory?

**Maharshi:** Shankara also said that the world is Brahman or the Self. What he objected to is one's imagining that the Self is limited by the names and forms that constitute the world. He only said that the world has no reality apart from Brahman. Brahman or the Self is like a cinema screen and the world like the pictures on it. You can see the picture only so long there is a screen. But when the observer himself becomes the screen only the Self remains.\(^2\)

Sri Bhagavan advises us to pay attention to the seer (who sees creation) rather than to creation itself. This is the gist of the dialogue that follows:

**Devotee:** There is one process of creation mentioned in the *Upanishads* and another in the *puranas*. Which of them is true?

**Maharshi:** They are many, and meant to indicate that the creation has a cause and a creator should be posited so that one might seek the cause. The emphasis is on the purpose of the theory and not on the process of creation. Moreover, the creation is perceived

---

2. *The Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words*: Sri Ramanasramam, p.11 (1960 Edn.).
by someone. There are no objects without the subject, that is, the objects do not come and tell you that they are, but it is you who says that there are the objects. The objects are therefore what the seer makes of them. They have no existence independent of the subject. Find out what you are and then you understand what the world is. That is the object of the theory.\(^3\)

In the introduction to his Tamil rendering of *Dakshinamurty Stotra* of Shankaracharya, Sri Bhagavan explains how Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatsujata and Sanatkumara, the four sons of Brahma (born of his mind) attained Self-realisation.

They saw Dakshinamurty (Siva) sitting under the sacred banyan tree in a state of Silence and Self-absorption. Seeing the Perfect Repose of the Lord, the king of yogis, they felt attracted to Him like iron filings towards a magnet.

The silent *upadesa* of the Lord had an immediate effect on them. Their doubts were at an end. They fell into *samadhi* and realised the Self.

Explaining further, Sri Bhagavan says that even the highest class of seekers are not able to absorb in this manner the truth behind silent absorption in the Self, which is one’s own Reality. Shankaracharya, in order to help such people, composed the hymn and taught that the world which seems an obstruction (to the seeker), the seer, the light which enables one to see (the world) and the power which withdraws it (back into the Self) — are not apart from oneself. *Everything is the Self*.\(^4\)

In his instruction to K.L. Sarma, Sri Bhagavan has explained the significance of *Dakshinamurty Stotra*.

Maharshi says:

\[\ldots\] Sri Sankara, being the *avatar* of Siva, was full of compassion for fallen beings. He wanted all of them to realise their blissful Self. He could not reach them all with His Silence. So he composed the *Dakshinamurti Stotra* in the form of a hymn so that people might read it and understand the Truth.

What is the nature of illusion? All are in the grip of enjoyment, that is, *bhokta, bhogyam, bhoga*. This is due to the wrong notion that *bhogya vastu* (the objects) are real. The ego, the world and the Creator are the fundamentals underlying the illusion. If they are known to be not apart from the Self, there will be no more illusion.

The first four stanzas deal with the world. It is shown to be the same as the Master whose Self is that of the seeker also, or the Master to whom the seeker surrenders himself. The second four stanzas deal with the individual whose Self is shown to be the Self of the Master. The ninth stanza deals with Isvara and the tenth with *siddhi* or Realisation.

---

\(^3\) *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No. 387, pp.353-54 (1968 Edn.).

\(^4\) The full text of *Dakshinamurty Stotra* appears between pages 10 and 11.
The fact that Sri Bhagavan chose Dakshinamurty Stotra as one of the works of Shankaracharya for translation by him is enough to bring out its importance.

It provides the answer to many questions regarding the world with which the common man is obsessed. It is a boon to serious seekers.

The teachings of Shankaracharya and Sri Bhagavan are identical. They enable us to have the proper attitude towards the world — to view it as the Self.

It should be remembered that maya is subordinate to the Self. The Self can never be subordinate to maya.

The world is not apart from the Self, for the simple reason that it cannot be apart from the Self.

---

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 569, p.529 (1968 Edn.).

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI BHAGAVAN
By A. Devaraja Mudaliar

When I entered the hall in the evening Bhagavan was saying, “Everything we see is changing, always changing. There must be something unchanging as the basis and source of all this.”

G. V. S.: What justification have we for imagining that the source of all this must be unchanging?

Bhagavan: It is not mere thinking or imagining that the ‘I’ is unchanging. It is a fact of which everyone is aware. The ‘I’ exists in sleep when all the changing things do not exist. It exists in dream and in waking. The ‘I’ remains changeless in all these states while other things come and go.

Dr. S. Mani, (Assistant Director of Public Health at Madras): But why should these things, that is the world, appear?

Bhagavan: To whom does it appear? You see and so the world exists. Does it exist independently of the seer? Does it come and tell you, “I exist”? What proof is there of its existence except that you say you see or perceive it?

Another visitor: I want to have darsan of God. What should I do?

Bhagavan: First we must know what you mean by ‘I’ and ‘God’ and by ‘darsan of God’

(The visitor dropped the matter and said no more.)

— (Author’s) Day by Day with Bhagavan, entry for 15-6-46.
The Silent Teacher

By His Holiness Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati
(Shankaracharya of Dwaraka Pitha and Jyotirmath)

We present here a synopsis of the speech made by His Holiness at Ahmedabad on September 24, 1988, on the occasion of release of two books in Gujarati on Bhagavan Sri Ramana. The function was organized by Sri Ramana Maharshi Kendra, Ahmedabad.

I had the good fortune to have the darshan of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He was a divine being, the most majestic of persons in his uttermost simplicity, radiating a peace and benevolence beyond words. His mere presence answered questions and dispelled the doubts of those who went to him.

You know the famous legend about Bhagavan Dakshinamurti, who was Siva Himself in the form of a youthful guru sitting under a banyan tree and teaching spiritual wisdom in silence to the Sanatkumaras, the four Sanaka brothers. This incident is summarised in a beautiful sloka:

A miracle was wrought under the banyan tree
The disciples were old and the guru young.
The guru’s exposition was in silence
But the doubts of the disciples were dispelled.

It was Bhagavan Siva as Dakshinamurti who found reincarnation in Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. The Maharshi was silent and still like Arunachala. Not for him chatting, arguments, disputations, and discourses. Devotees and doubters alike who went to him had the strangest of experiences in their lives. A peace beyond words permeated their inner being and they found all their questions answered without having been asked and without the Maharshi uttering a word to them.

No wonder that Sri Ramana has been hailed as the re-embodiment of Bhagavan Dakshinamurti who is revered as the Adiguru, the First Preceptor.

Bhagavan Ramana expounded the Vedanta to seekers in a most beautiful, profound and simple way, through his silence, sparse speech and, above all, by his wonderful life. He says, “Find thyself by Self-enquiry. If you want to realise Brahman, the Absolute, realise thy Self. The Self is Brahman. Brahman resides in the cave of your spiritual heart. Enter the heart.”

Bhagavan Ramana’s style of teaching recalls to one’s mind the story of a seeker who approached a Mahatma and asked him, “Sir, have you seen God?” The Mahatma shot back a query, “Why do you ask this question?” The seeker said, “If you have had the darshan of the Lord, I would like to know how I can...”

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, December 1989.
also see Him”. The Mahatma said, “All right, I shall arrange a darshan for you with God, but you should first tell me who you are so that I may introduce you properly to the Lord”. The seeker said, “My name is Devadatta Sharma”. The Mahatma said, “That is only your name, but who are you?” The seeker replied, “I have told you, sir, I am Sharma, a brahmin.” With apparent impatience, the Mahatma said, “Come on, sir, that is just your caste, which least interests me. Who in fact are you?” The seeker said, “I am a professor in a college”. The Mahatma said, “That again is not you. It is only your profession. Tell me who are you?” The poor man, getting nervous, blurted out “I, I am, I am a man.” The Mahatma laughed and said, “As if I don’t know! I don’t want your gender. Who are you? Speak up.” The seeker said “I am a member of the human race.” The Mahatma said, “That represents your genus. It applies to all human beings. I simply want to know the true identity of the person who wants to meet the Supreme Lord.”

Thus the Mahatma countered everyone of the answers given by the seeker. In the end, the man realised that he knew so little about himself. The Mahatma finally gave him the upadesa, “How can a person who knows so little about himself know the Supreme Lord? Therefore, first know thyself. When you know thyself, you do not need anybody’s help to arrange a darshan with God!”

People who were in Sri Ramana’s extraordinary Presence were able to sense that there is no God higher than a truly egoless Being. Sri Ramana’s Presence, his look, his smile imparted upadesa to the seekers of Truth. The Maharshi exhorted people to avoid futile discussions. He advised them to find within themselves, by dint of Self-enquiry, that which is ever natural to everybody, the Self which, he said, was not different from the Guru and God.

The Self is beyond the five koshas or sheaths of anna, prana, mana, vijnana and ananda (gross body, sense, mind, intellect, bliss). The ego or ‘I’-thought originates in these five sheaths. When we use the word ‘I’, it refers either to the body, or to our senses or to this life, or the mind and the intellect behind it. We realise that each one of these by itself is not the real ‘I’. What remains after we negate each one of these is the real ‘I’ or the Self which cannot be negated. Achieving Self-realisation is not an activity to be engaged in, outside oneself. The Self inheres in everything. Darkness needs light to dispel it, but Light needs no other light to reveal itself. The Self is Light itself. The Self is en-crust ed with several layers of the ego, which is anatma, non-Self. If the ego is dropped, then the Self is unveiled and shines on its own.

Sri Ramana Maharshi stands as the ever-shining symbol of Self-realisation. He is a beacon of light to seekers of Truth. His eyes reflected his inner purity and shone with the lustre of the Self. The description of a Mahatma in Shiva Purana fits Sri Ramana Maharshi perfectly:

The one who is immersed in the experience of Truth confers on those who come within the range of his vision deliverance from all sins by a single look of his.
Let us all remember Sri Ramana with great reverence, meditate on his teachings and enshrine him in our hearts. Let us go to Bhagavan Ramana and imbibe his teachings and let us hope that we will reach the goal of human life which is Self-realisation.

SRI BHAGAVAN'S EXPLANATIONS ON 'WHO AM I? ENQUIRY

By A. Devaraja Mudaliar

One Mr. Joshi, introduced by Chagganlal Vanmali Yogi raised some questions regarding the practice of 'Who am I?' enquiry. His dialogue with Sri Bhagavan is reproduced below.

Joshi: When I think 'Who am I?', the answer comes 'I am not this mortal body but I am chaitanya, atma, or paramatma.' And suddenly another question arises — 'Why has atma come into maya?' or in other words 'Why has God created this world?'

Bhagavan: To enquire 'Who am I?' really means trying to find out the source of the ego or the 'I' thought. You are not to think of other thoughts, such as 'I am not this body, etc.' Seeking the source of 'I' serves as a means of getting rid of all other thoughts. We should not give scope to other thoughts, such as you mention, but must keep the attention fixed on finding out the source of the 'I' thought, by asking (as each thought arises) to whom the thought arises and if the answer is 'I get the thought' by asking further who is this 'I' and whence its source?

Joshi: Is atma a subject of sakshatkara?

Bhagavan: The atma is as it is. It is sakshat always. There are not two atmas, one to know and one to be known. To know it is to be it. It is not a state where one is conscious of anything else. It is consciousness itself.

Joshi: I do not understand the meaning of "brahma satyam jagat mithya (Brahman is real, the world is unreal)". Does this world have real existence or not? Does the jnani not see the world or does he see it in a different form?

Bhagavan: Let the world bother about its reality or falsehood. Find out first about your own reality. Then all things will become clear. What do you care how the jnani sees the world? You realise yourself and then you will understand. The jnani sees that the world of names and forms does not limit the Self, and that the Self is beyond them.

Joshi: I do not know how to worship. So kindly show me the way to worship.

Bhagavan: Is there a 'worshipper' and a 'worshipped'? Find out the 'I', the worshipper; that is the best way. Always the seer must be traced.

— (Author's) Day by Day with Bhagavan, entry for 28-12-45.
Selections from the *Veda*

*(Rig Veda X.117)*

*Support the Needy*

Translated by Prof. A.C. Bose

The *devas* have not given hunger to be our death;¹
Even to the well-fed man death comes in many shapes.²
The wealth of the liberal never wastes away,
He who gives no protection finds no consoler.

He who, possessed of food, hardens his heart against
The weak man, craving nourishment, and suffering,
Who comes to him for help, though of old he helped him —
Surely such a one finds no consoler.

He is liberal who gives to one who asks for alms,
To the distressed man who seeks food, wandering;
Success comes to him in the challenge of battle.
And for future conflicts he makes a friend for him.

He is no friend who does not give to a friend,
To a comrade who comes imploring for food;
Let him leave such a man — his is not a home —
And rather seek a stranger who brings him comfort.³

---

¹ Hunger should not, like disease, be accepted as a natural cause of death.
² Men who do not have to face starvation cannot be said to be immune from death.
³ *a home* — belonging to an inhabitant of the land, bound by ties of kinship. A home is not meant only for its members but also for others in need of food and shelter.
*stranger* — one not belonging to the clan or the state.
Let the rich man satisfy one who seeks help,
And let him look upon a longer pathway;
Wealth revolves like the wheels of a chariot,
Coming now to one, now to another.  

In vain does the foolish man acquire food;
It is — I speak the truth — verily his death;
He does not cherish a comrade or a friend.
He is all sin who eats all alone.

The ploughshare ploughing produces the food,
While a man rambles along the road on foot;
The Veda-knower who speaks is better than one who does not;
So the liberal kinsman surpasses the illiberal.

He who has one foot outstrips the biped,
The biped leaves the three-footed behind,
The quadruped comes at the biped's call,
And stands looking where five meet together.

Two hands are alike but their work is not alike.
Two sister cows do not give milk alike.
Of two twins the powers are not similar,
And two kinsmen are not equally pleasing.

---

4 The rich man should take a long view of life and realise he may also one day become poor and need another's help.
5 death — moral death; pursuit of the path of sin.
6 As people doing their duties in pursuit of their vocations are superior to those who remain idle, so the liberal man is superior to one who shows no consideration to the nearby members of the society.
7 The quantity of wealth is no indication of a man's worth. The less wealthy are often better than the more wealthy.
   one foot — the sun (a technical description in the Veda).
   biped — man, three-footed — an old man with two feet and a staff.
   five — a knot of five men (a line of five).
8 This is a criticism of the kinsman who does not show the proper interest in a distressed member of the clan.
Shankaracharya’s Hymn to Dakshinamurti
(Translated from Sri Bhagavan’s Tamil rendering)

INVOCATION
That Shankara who appeared as Dakshinamurti to grant peace to the great ascetics (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata), who revealed his real state of Silence, and who has expressed the nature of the Self in this hymn, abides in me.

THE HYMN
He who teaches through silence the nature of the supreme Brahman, who is a youth, who is the most eminent Guru surrounded by the most competent disciples that remain steadfast in Brahman, who has the hand pose indicating illumination,1 who is of the nature of bliss, who revels in himself, who has a benign countenance — that Father who has a south-facing form,2 we adore.

1. To him who by maya, as by dream, sees within himself the universe which is inside him, like a city that appears in a mirror, (but) which is manifested as if externally to him who apprehends, at the time of awakening, his own single Self, to him, the primal Guru, Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

2. To him who like a magician or even like a great yogi displays, by his own power, this universe which at the beginning is undifferentiated like the sprout in the seed, but which is made differentiated under the varied conditions of space, time, and karma and posited by maya: to him, the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

3. To him whose luminosity alone, which is of the nature of existence, shines forth, entering the objective world which is like the non-existent; to him who instructs those who resort to him through the text ‘That thou art’; to him who realizing whom there will be no more fall into the ocean of birth; to him who is the refuge of the ascetics, the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

4. To him who is luminous like the light of a lamp set in a pot with many holes; to him whose knowledge moves outward through the eye and other sense organs; to him who is effulgent as ‘I know’, and the entire universe shines after him; to him, the

1 There are many traditional mudras or postures of the hands which are used in Indian dancing and iconography, each of which has its own meaning.
2 The supreme Guru is the spiritual north pole and therefore traditionally faces southwards.
unmoving Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

5. They who know the 'I' as body, breath, senses, intellect, or the void, are deluded like women and children, and the blind and the stupid, and talk much. To him who destroys the great delusion produced by ignorance; to him who removes the obstacles to knowledge, the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

6. To him, who sleeps when the manifested mind gets resolved, on account of the veiling by maya, like the sun or the moon in eclipse, and on waking recognizes self-existence in the form 'I have slept till now'; to him the Guru of all that moves and moves not, Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

7. To him who, by means of the hand- pose indicating illumination, manifest his own Self that for ever shines within as 'I', constantly, in all the inconstant states such as infancy, etc., and waking, etc. — to him whose eye is of the form of the fire of knowledge, the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

8. To the self who, deluded by maya, sees, in dreaming and waking, the universe in its distinctions such as cause and effect, master and servant, disciple and teacher, and father and son, to him, the Guru of the world, Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

9. To him whose eightfold form is all this moving and unmoving universe, appearing as earth, water, fire, air, ether, the sun, the moon, and soul; beyond whom, supreme and all-pervading, there exists naught else for those who enquire — to him the gracious Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be!

10. Since, in this hymn, the all-self-hood has thus been explained, by listening to it, by reflecting on its meaning, by meditating on it, and by reciting it, there will come about lordship together with the supreme splendour consisting in all-self-hood; thence will be achieved, again, the unimpeded supernormal power presenting itself in eight forms.

**FAITH IN GOD**

By H.H. Chandrasekhara Bharati, Shankaracharya of Sringeri

Have faith in God, His words and His servants. You will feel before long an immense relief. The thought of His ever-living presence with you will be a great solace to you. Once you begin to feel such a presence, a joy unknown to you before, will begin to be felt. You will not feel that time is something to be merely spent in some pursuit or other, but is something which has to be intensively lived in the pursuit and enjoyment of the bliss of peace. There will no more be any room for pessimistic thoughts nor will life seem a blank with no purpose to serve.

— *Dialogues with the Guru.*
SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI advises that Self-realization will naturally arise by making the mind quiescent through constant Self-enquiry (atma-vichara). He teaches that there is no practice other than Self-enquiry which can completely quieten the mind. He adds that leading a sattvic life is the best discipline which can be undertaken to help the practice achieve its ends. He says this in answer to questions (numbers 10-12) in his written work, *Who am I?* The Maharshi does not actually advise his disciples to lead anything specifically called a sattvic life; what he does advise is that by the taking of sattvic food in moderate quantities . . . the sattvic quality of mind will increase, and that will be helpful to Self-enquiry. However, leading a sattvic life and eating sattvic food, by implication, can be seen to be one and the same. This is because, it seems logical to assume, the more that the quality of sattva is increased in daily life, the greater the benefit to Self-enquiry. By implication, eating sattvic food and leading an un-sattvic life, are incompatible trends.

*Sattva and the Gunas*

*Sattva* is one of three qualities, sometimes called characteristics, tendencies, or primary constituents, the other two being *rajas* and *tamas*; it will be shown that the qualities of *rajas* and *tamas* are in opposition to one another, whereas the qualities of *sattva* rise above the other two. Collectively, the three are known as the *gunas*; and these are said, in Vedic scriptures, to appear throughout Nature (Prakriti), the primordial substance out of which all things are created. Thus, the *gunas* underlie, in various proportions, every aspect of manifest nature — from animals to plants, and in every atom. In fact, according to this law, there is nowhere and nothing within the three worlds (causal, subtle, and gross) which do not have these qualities. And, of course, people are no exception. Lord Krishna, explaining creation to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, says that All actions take place in time by the interweaving of the forces of Nature. This, according to Shankaracharya’s commentary on this verse, indicates that it is only by means of the *gunas* that any action can occur — the individual is deluded if he

---

believes that he himself is the doer. The ego is subject to the influence of the gunas and would be imbued with the three qualities. Ignorance (nescience) is cleared by rising above each one of its qualities, by rising even above the final sattva quality, and thereby rising above Nature itself. Sri Ramana has said many times: Pursue the I-thought and all questions will disappear.

Sri Ramana further expands what occurs with the three gunas in Self-Enquiry:

What was (originally) the pure sattva mind, of the nature of pure knowledge, forgets its knowledge-nature on account of nescience and gets transformed into the world under the influence of tamas. Under the influence of rajas it imagines ‘I am the body, the world is real’, and acquires the consequent merit and demerit through attachment, aversion, etc.

All three gunas are intermixed to varying degrees which, in turn, leads to the seemingly infinite diversity to be found within Nature; yet each has a distinctive set of characteristics which individuals can trace in their own personality and lifestyle — so it is useful to describe each one in detail.

The first, or what might be described as the lowest of the three qualities, is that of tamas, which means “darkness”. The colour given to describe it in the scriptures, unsurprisingly, is black. Words used to depict the attributes of tamas used in the Upanishads include: fear, confusion, despondency, and grief; and in the Bhagavad Gita, inertia, negligence, and delusion; Vasishtha adds the terms ‘unawakened and dull’. Tamas has been identified as ‘the gloom and darkness of hell’ and is the ‘cause of heaviness, ignorance, illusion, lust, anger, pride, sorrow, dullness and stolidity’. Shankara describes the effect of tamas plainly; he says: ‘One who is afflicted by these deficiencies knows nothing. He just stands still like a post, or like one dazed by sleep’. As we can see, tamas is not an attractive quality, yet each individual has it to a greater or lesser degree in various aspects of his personality.

The second lowest of the gunas is called rajas, and its meaning is: “to be coloured, affected, excited, or charmed.” The attributed colour is red. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna uses words such as thirst and attachment, and clinging to describe it. From the Upanishads, words such as passion, greed, violence, jealousy, desire, instability, fickleness, and possessiveness are used. And Shankara, again, says: ‘From rajas there constantly flow attachment and suffering and other such modifications of the mind. . . . Its dire

7 Ibid.
characteristics are lust, anger, greed, hypocrisy, intolerance, egoism, jealousy, envy and the like,. . . rajas is the source of bondage. There is much of the rajasic qualities which are undesirable and which can be held firmly in check through discipline.

The highest of the gunas is called sattva — it takes its meaning from the word Sat, one of the three characteristics of Brahman, of Supreme Reality, or God. Its colour is white. Lord Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, characterizes sattva as: immaculate, illuminating, and without ill; whilst Shankara makes a two-part distinction. He describes the attributes of "pure sattva" as 'radiance, direct experience of the Self, supreme peace, satisfaction, joy, [and] sustained devotion to the supreme Self'. Shankara also describes what he calls "mixed sattva", that is, sattva which has traces of one or other or both of the remaining two gunas. Drawing from the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras, mixed sattva he describes as 'absence of pride, the general and particular laws of conduct, faith, devotion, deep desire for liberation, the six-fold spiritual wealth beginning with inner control, and desisting from pursuit of the unreal'. A word which can be used to additionally describe sattva in a broad, practical sense is the word "clean" — as the Methodist founder, John Wesley, said: “cleanliness is next to godliness.”

Out of three gunas, it is not difficult to see that the qualities implied by sattva are by far the best to bring into and to govern the spiritual life — in all thoughts, words, and actions. Needless to say, it is this characteristic that Sri Ramana recommends to develop, and this, at the expense of both the qualities of rajas and tamas. Additionally, as mentioned above, there is something to aim for, which surpasses or transcends the three gunas; this is the state that can be described as being without qualities or characteristics, that is, something which can be worked towards, once a sattvic life has been achieved. Lord Krishna teaches such in the Bhagavad Gita, 'Arise beyond the three gunas, Arjuna! Be in truth eternal, beyond earthly opposites. Beyond gains and possessions, possess thine own soul'. Ramakrishna Paramahansa expands on this, 'Of these [gunas], sattva alone points the way to God. But even sattva cannot take a man to God. . . . Sattva is like the last step of the stairs. Next to it is the roof. The Supreme Brahman is man's own abode. One cannot attain the knowledge of Brahman unless one transcends the three gunas'.

Summarizing their characteristics, Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna about the difference between each quality:

Sattva binds to happiness; rajas to action; tamas, over-clouding wisdom, binds to lack of vigilance. From sattva arises
wisdom, from rajas greed, from tamas negligence, delusion and ignorance. Those who are in sattva climb the path that leads on high, those who are in rajas follow the level path, those who are in tamas sink downwards on the lower path.¹⁴

Here, Lord Krishna implies that each person can choose the direction of his spiritual path: downwards, staying on the level path without progression, or climbing to the higher path, and there is no question about which way Sri Ramana wants those who embark on Self-enquiry to lead their lives. What is more, the choice of direction is not one that is made once and then forgotten. It is a choice that aspirants need to make for every thought, every word, and every action.

Sri Ramana teaches that effort and vigilance are very important, particularly in the early stages of this endeavour, in order to enable Self-realization where, at the peak of the spiritual path, no such effort is required at all — and one of the mainstays of this path is to follow a sattvic diet. What is meant by diet? Food and drink, of course, but it entails much more than this. Diet is to do with all the senses. Whatever is put in, and whatever is put out, needs to be sattvic: the words that are spoken, the words or sounds that are heard, what is touched, the characteristics that are expressed, and more. Bringing a sattvic discipline to play in the spiritual path, in turn, governs much of aspirant's day-to-day life. As can be imagined, leading a sattvic life incorporates more than simply changing regular habits. It is a complete transformation, a dedication if you like, to following the higher spiritual path towards resolving the purpose of life.

Examples of Sattva

Sri Ramana teaches that, if possible, aspirants become vegetarian.¹⁵ Zoological experts have proved conclusively that the human being was originally vegetarian. So becoming a vegetarian now is becoming something that the body is already prepared for. And changes to eating habits automatically bring with them changes throughout life — and, on this spiritual path, these changes will lead towards purity.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna describes the different types of food:

Men who are pure like food which is pure: which gives health, mental power, strength and long life; which has taste, is soothing and nourishing, which makes glad the heart of man. Men of Rajas like food of Rajas: acid and sharp, and salty and dry, and which brings heaviness and sickness and pain. Men of darkness eat food which is stale and tasteless, which is rotten and left overnight, impure, unfit for holy offerings.¹⁶

Perhaps this last point which Lord Krishna makes is a vital one: were it possible, would the food that aspirants eat be fit and suitable

¹⁴ Bhagavad Gita 1963:67 (XIV, 9, 17, 18).
¹⁵ For example, see Be As You Are: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, David Godman (Ed.). 1985:133, London: Arkana.
¹⁶ Bhagavad Gita 1962. 76f (XVII. 8-10).
to offer to Sri Ramana for him to eat? If not, why not? This is a question well worth pondering over.

Eating sattvic food requires a reappraisal of daily life as every meal may need to be different, although this needs to be put into context. Balance is important.

Sattvic living is something to work towards, not necessarily to go all the way all at once. Leading a proper life requires a new balance, one which every person needs to work out for himself.

With regard to eggs, these are used by some vegetarians, but eggs in India are considered to be meat. When Sri Ramana talks about eating vegetarian food, he does not include eggs.17

What are some of the general benefits that can be found in trying to lead a sattvic life, particularly in relation to Sri Ramana’s teachings? Spiritual practice (sadhana) is not something separate from day-to-day living, it is day-to-day living. Questions which can be asked include: Am I in full control? Am I responsible for all that I do? Am I mastering my senses, my impulses, and my desires? Leading a sattvic life helps the truth about life to be remembered — it is easy to forget God. For instance, every time a drink or meal is taken, it can be done so in being more conscious of the fact that both what is being consumed and the body are God. They both can be treated with great respect and care. Sattvic living helps the truth about Who am I? to be remembered. Through proper living, the aspirant aims not to cause or be responsible for harm to any living being and, by so doing, no being is killed or mistreated to eat or to wear. This is non-harmfulness (ahimsa). Proper living gives the confidence to know that what is done is right, that the aspirant’s conduct is dharmic. Knowing this, peace may be increased, whilst the daily struggle of making many choices and decisions can be reduced. What is more, life can become more silent. Finally, all this effort can be carried out with love as the ever present, ever expanding reason. Living by sattvic principles can feel as if God, not the person, governs life, bringing God closer. More and more, “I” am not the doer.

Tamasic living is living in darkness and ignorance. Rajasic living is living in passion and attachment. Sattvic living is living in purity and peacefulness.

Is it difficult to lead a sattvic life? The answer is: not at all. It can be full of joy. Important decisions seem to be made without involvement of the self, so allowing more time to work on deepening the spiritual practice. Some might say, and have said, that the discipline of living in this way takes all the fun out of life. But this need not be the case, it can open the way to greater joy — a deeper, inner joy.

Ramana teaches not only the enquiry about life’s fundamental question Who am I? but also the best environment through which this can be done.
About the year 1948 the Ashram received a letter from His Holiness Sri Shankaracharya of Puri (Govardhan Math), expressing his desire to pay a visit to Bhagavan and to get certain doubts cleared. Incidentally the letter categorically mentioned the doubts and asked that they might be resolved in a written reply. The chief of these referred to a certain Agamic text: *Hara gauri samyogat....... avacchaya yogah* and asked what this “avacchaya yogah” is.

I placed this letter at the feet of Bhagavan and asked what answer should be sent to him. Bhagavan simply laughed and said that the questioner knew it all himself and needed no fresh light, but that he would know it better when he came in person. A reply was accordingly sent on these lines.

After some days the Acharya visited the Ashram. Bhagavan gave instructions for him to be received and attended to with all care and respect for his exalted position; the Ashram spared no pains in arranging for his reception and accommodation.

Sri Bhagavan was seated in the Golden Jubilee Hall on the granite sofa, and eager spectators had gathered in their hundreds. Quite near Bhagavan’s sofa a small dais was arranged with a deer skin for the Pontiff to sit on. He was escorted to the presence of Bhagavan. On coming before Maharshi, the Acharya greeted him with his staff, as is the custom of sannyasins, and was shown the seat arranged for him. He was surprised that so prominent a seat had been arranged. He asked the dais to be removed, spread the deer skin on the floor and sat on it.

After a little preliminary talk, the Acharya repeated the main question of his letter and requested Bhagavan to enlighten him on the meaning of this phrase. Bhagavan gave him his look of Grace and was silent, no words were exchanged and the silence lasted over half an hour.

Then Bhagavan smiled and remarked, “What is there? You know it already; this text represents the very essence of Divine knowledge. When nature unites with the Person, then the visible becomes all shadows. It is as meaningful as pictures on the cinema screen, and then will be experienced the state of
All-Self as seen. The one Being-Consciousness which projects all this out of itself, sustains and then withdraws it again into Itself. Having swallowed all the shadows of this world, Itself dances as the ocean of bliss, the Reality or substratum of all that is, was and shall be. And then it is 'I-I.'

The Acharya seemed to have received new light and life; he was all joy. He said that in all his wanderings through the country he had tried to be enlightened upon this mystery, but it was only here that he got the secret and the truth of light as explained in the texts of the Vedanta.

So pleased was he with the answer that he repeated his visit to Bhagavan when the Matrubhuteswara shrine was consecrated, and he personally supervised all the rituals in the yagasalas and ensured that everything was done properly.
N O T H I N G in life is more important than meditation. A life that is devoid of meditation soon becomes dull and superficial. Unless meditation is the be-all and end-all of life, there is the risk of degeneration into an animal-like existence that is centred around eating, drinking and mating. Persons who do not meditate tend to overestimate the things of this world and underestimate spirituality. But those who meditate realise that changes for the better keep on taking place in their inward nature. As they progress spiritually they can also observe that their day-to-day problems are no longer as burdensome as they used to be in times past. Above all, by meditating correctly they begin to experience a stress-free state of physical and psychological well-being.

I meet many men and women who have an aversion to meditation. They say that they are too busy with mundane matters and cannot afford the time and energy to meditate. What an excuse! A committed materialist once remarked that only simple-minded folk are given to meditating because “meditation is just a pleasant escape from life’s sorrows and trials.” But meditation, it must be understood, is not necessarily an escape, for it has traditionally proved to be the quickest path to Enlightenment. Regarding persons who stubbornly refuse to meditate, they deserve to be pitied. They know not what they are missing! Moreover, meditation is surely one of the best ways of spending your time, particularly because birth as a human being is such a rare event in our sorrowful samsaric cycle of births and death. Needless to say, those who for whatever reason fail to dedicate themselves to the supreme purpose of life, which is right meditation, are only wasting their precious lives. Now is the time to start meditating.

I was born in Sri Lanka where people set great store on meditation. Fortunately I studied Buddhism in two of the finest Buddhist colleges where students are instructed in meditation. The methods of meditation are too numerous to mention. Who am I to sit in judgement over these techniques? Nevertheless, by a process of trial and error I have discovered that I cannot subscribe to any system of meditation. But I grant that others might find them quite helpful in obtaining some degree of inner tranquillity. However, does inner calm necessarily result in Liberation?

During my schooldays I made friends with a Dutch Buddhist monk called Dhammapala (Henri van Zeyst) who had previously been a Catholic priest. A thin tall man with an
ascetic face, Dhammapala once related a revealing incident in his life as a monk: “along with twenty other monks, I was invited to an alms-giving in Kandy when we all took part in a feast. After the sumptuous lunch the donors requested me to preach a sermon. Among other things, I said: ‘There is no harm in making charitable donations. You will certainly acquire merit by giving food to monks but if you want to attain Nibbana you must meditate.’ After we had returned to the temple that afternoon, some of the monks scolded me. They said: ‘You were right in what you said, but if we all start saying such things who will give us food?’”

In nearly every method of meditation, alas, there is a doer who does the meditating. The existence of this doer or “I” is what keeps us in samsaric servitude. The more the “I” is activated, the stronger it becomes. Will the “I” ever be a party to its own destruction?

When, for instance, one meditates on Metta (loving-kindness), believing that one is thereby radiating thoughts and feelings of goodwill in all directions to beings both visible and invisible, naively wishing every creature happiness, don’t all these actions subtly spring from the ego? Is the ego given to doing anything that is not egocentric? Besides, are persons who have envy and hatred and malice ever likely to treat others with genuine loving-kindness? In other words, given my evil and beastly nature, am I ever likely to behave compassionately?

Whatever I do, the “I” or the ego is always there. It is like the inseparable shadow from which one can never escape. Now, is there a sadhana (spiritual practice) wherein the “I” is totally absent? As the “doer” is always present in all one’s thoughts, words and deeds, it is very clear that doing nothing, which is the state of inaction, is certainly preferable to the self-centred state of action. All our thoughts, words and deeds are not only strongly influenced by the selfish demands of the ego, but also originate in the ego itself. Therefore any so-called spiritual practice that is even slightly tainted with the ego must be regarded as highly suspect and unreliable.

Would not all the pious practices of the “doer” of meditation inevitably result in dismal failure since the “doer” is incapable of impartial and undistorted perception? Has the mind the ability to observe its own nature disinterestedly because, given its vasanas (subtle desires and latent tendencies), the mind is inevitably an interested party? Our conditioned psyche is doomed in the sense that there is nothing that it can really do per se in order to progress spiritually. Now, what happens when this terrible predicament of ours is clearly understood? Naturally there is helplessness and one realises that the state of inaction is the only possible sadhana. Then there is stillness. It is a natural stillness, not a discipline-induced artificial stillness that is temporary. In the past the hyperactive “doer” tried hard to become still, whereas now there is the supreme state of being still as the dangerous “doer” has died. This inner transformation is an effortless happening.

It is necessary to elaborate on the state of inaction. It can rightly be described as the state of non-exertion because there is no
longer any craving for either earthly possessions or spiritual accomplishment. As the restless struggle to progress spiritually has abruptly ended, one naturally treats with complete indifference the question of whether or not one has finally succeeded in finding liberation. All seeking has stopped as the ‘seeker’ (the fictitious entity called ‘I’) is no more.

The ensuing state of inaction is by no means a state of passive idleness, but rather an extraordinary dimension that is characterised by strange and sudden upsurges of sublime energy and also by outpourings of altruistic compassion. Then the purified heart radiates real love that only gives but never asks. Gone for ever is the mischievous mind that hitherto overshadowed the Self. Once the Indescribable completely takes over one’s life, all action starts flowing from the Self alone. The state of inaction is, so to speak, a celestial sphere in which the Self holds sway in all its splendour.

This is the disciplineless discipline, the methodless method, the pathless path, the systemless system, the wayless way of turning within and discovering the Absolute and eternally resting therein.

What happens in the supreme Kingdom of Pure Awareness? All the activities of the mind will be seen as a mere series of shifting scenes on the changeless screen of pure awareness. It will come as a complete surprise to realise that all one’s past problems and sufferings had resulted from the terrible mistake of relying upon the mind for happiness, instead of discovering that peaceful and pristine source — pure awareness — and setting down once and for all.

The deceptive ways of the mind can be comprehended only from the vantage point of pure awareness — the unsullied substratum on which the mind comes into existence and into which it must eventually merge. Whereas the mind is just a temporary resident of this Kingdom and a proudly troublesome one at that, this holy realm remains outside the sphere of the mind. The mind dwells in it but not vice versa.

The bright light of pure awareness is Liberation itself. Can this light be suddenly switched on, so to speak, by making a determined effort on the ego’s part? Would the “I” be willing or cooperative in this matter? That hardly happens for the existence of the “I” is the major obstacle to noticing the light. Actually that light was always there in all its splendour. It is simply that all these past years we have been foolishly unaware of its perpetual presence.

When the torch of pure awareness focuses on the operations of the mind, at once there is undistorted perception and the flowering of intelligence. Then it will be seen that thoughts and feelings are like short-lived waves that are breaking on the seashore, making it very clear that “consciousness” or “mind” is just a haphazard collection of thoughts, memories, feelings, sensations and the like. The contents of the mind keep on changing. One combination of thoughts, feelings and the like are soon followed by another one. The mind certainly seems to exist but in reality there are only streams of im-
ages that quickly appear and soon disappear. Therefore one of the greatest discoveries that meditators make is the startling realisation that there is no such thing as “mind”, which is just a concept or a figment of the imagination. Similarly, it dawns on the meditator that there is no such thing as “I” either. The cherished belief in the existence of a “personality” springs from the erroneous impression in the thought process that there is an everlasting entity called the “I” which exists separately from all other things. But, as already described, there is nothing in the field of consciousness that is unchanging or constant.

Many are the theories relating to the emergence of the ego. Some say that the “I” thought was the first thought; others maintain that on account of the mind’s kaleidoscopic unsteadiness, which results in a sense of insecurity and uneasiness, the mind cunningly invents the “I” that helps to generate a sense of undisturbed security and comfortable continuity. Be that as it may, it is more important to dissolve the ego than to speculate about its origins.

Why do we fail to see that thoughts distort the perception of reality? Man’s enslavement to thought is the root cause of his misery. Spending one’s entire life with a cluttered mind is one thing; using thought only when the situation so demands it and then disentangling oneself from thought, is quite another. The sages use thought only when it becomes necessary to do so, such as for purposes of communication, but immediately afterwards they revert to their natural and primordial state of pure awareness.

The liberated sage, observing all phenomena that arise from the senses, watching without judging, saying neither “this is good” nor “that is bad”, simply seeing how thoughts and feelings come into existence and then drift away like the passing clouds in the sky of pure awareness, remains forever in this state of deep meditation. This silent sphere is utterly blissful as he is no longer troubled by the doings of the “doer”. Having discovered that abiding and exalted state of egolessness, the sage has boundless compassion for one and all.

Moments of quietude prevail in the period of time between two thoughts. These are our sacred seconds. Whereas some human beings occasionally catch a glimpse of pure awareness, thereby experiencing a few fleeting moments of blessed calm, spiritually emancipated sages are permanently in this rare realm, hence peace and joy and freedom from sorrow and depression is for them the norm rather than the exception.

Today it has become fashionable to say that one practises meditation. Consequently one can find a bewildering variety of methods of meditation that are all attributed to the Buddha. I do not know if these techniques are authentic. Can anyone be very sure about them? I have heard it said that the Buddha did not stick to any particular method, but recommended ones that were appropriate for the special needs of individuals. The matter is unclear and confusing; be that as it may, what the Buddha actually did himself is far more significant than what he is supposed to have instructed others to practise. Surely his
deeds express the truth more accurately and eloquently than any words. How did the Buddha himself meditate?

Towards the end of his life the Buddha made a remarkable statement to his closest disciple Ananda: "Only on those occasions when the Perfect One stops focussing his attention on all that is external, by bringing his feelings to an end, by steadfastly remaining in the state that is detached and objectless, only then is the Perfect One’s body comfortable" (Mahaparinibbana Sutta — Digha Nikaya ii 100).

One can surmise that in this pure state he remained absolutely unaffected by both body and mind, neither sullied by emotions nor mental pictures. As he was totally withdrawn from all sense-experience, there was probably no consciousness of his own body either. There was inner peace because, paradoxical though it may seem, the Buddha’s supremely awakened state of being was full of vitality, but calm and unattached to anything nevertheless. He was active, yet inactive in this non-dualistic state.

If what the Buddha told Ananda is anything to go by, we can surmise that objectlessness is a thought-free state of nothingness in which there is no focusing of attention on anything. Neither is one under pressure to watch the seemingly ceaseless movement of the river of thoughts and feelings nor the breathing in and breathing out process. It is also noteworthy that the detached state has no vantage points whatsoever; there is no special vantage point such as the ego for thinking and judging and observing, precisely because there is no “thinker” (ego) that thinks thoughts. Strictly speaking, there are no thoughts either for one is, as already mentioned, in an objectless state. Therefore the highest meditation takes place only when, so to speak, the egoless state of emptiness looks at the prevailing emptiness itself.

An American correspondent, a young lady, asked me the following question. What spiritual practices, if any, do you do?

After a lifetime of doing various spiritual practices (sadhana), I have ceased doing any! One day I realised that the very desire to try doing this practice or that practice was really part of the mind’s turbulent disposition. So I stopped doing them altogether. Now I know that not doing any spiritual practice is in fact the highest spiritual practice! What I realised was essentially the teaching of a remarkable Sri Lankan saint. He said: “Summa Iru” which means DO NOTHING. Needless to say, I am deeply indebted to Saint Yogaswami of Sri Lanka.

I shall try to express myself in another way. The thought-process is in a state of perpetual flux. Restlessness is the basic characteristic of the mind. Understanding the restless nature of the mind is not at all easy, but when there is an insight into this matter, it will be very clearly seen that the desire to do various spiritual practices springs from this restlessness. The mind then withdrawn into itself and a state of serenity spontaneously comes into being. The ending of restlessness is the beginning of heavenly happiness.
Bhagavan’s Father

By R. Subramaniam

The following is a collection of episodes from the life of Sri Sundaram Iyer, father of Sri Bhagavan, from the recollections of his (Sundaram Iyer’s) sister’s son, P.K. Ramaswamy Iyer. R. Subramaniam is the son of P.K. Ramaswamy Iyer.

SUNDARAM IYER was a private vakil at Tiruchuzhi in the eighteen eighties. He had not obtained any degrees or diplomas in law. By his intelligence and common sense, by his clever advocacy and winning manners, by his character, personality and integrity, Sundaram Iyer not only commanded a lucrative practice in the Court of the Sub-Magistrate of Tiruchuzhi, but had won the love, esteem and confidence of the people of the locality. To the oppressed and downtrodden, to the poor and distressed, he was verily the lord and master. The so-called criminal tribes acclaimed him as their protector and benefactor.

Once the magistrate of the area happened to camp in a village a few miles from Tiruchuzhi and Sundaram Iyer had to appear in some cases posted for hearing at the camp. The magistrate had to reach the village in his double bullock cart, and with great pomp the bullock cart sped along the road, in the dense shade of the avenue trees. Soon it overtook Sundaram Iyer’s cart and went ahead. The magistrate did not choose to keep company with the vakil. The vakil was left far behind in his modest carriage and the magistrate, amidst official pomp and the jingling of bells, soon disappeared around the bend of the road.

What awaited him around the bend, the poor magistrate could not have foreseen; otherwise, he would have chosen to keep company with the modest vakil. Thieves surrounded his cart. The liveried servant protested in vain. The magistrate’s personality and his threats were of no avail. The cart driver stood rooted to the spot in terror. The thieves snatched the despatch box and were about to retreat in good order. But Lo! From behind the hedge came a shout; “Oh! The

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, July 1980.
vakil sami is coming!". The box was left on the road and the thieves took to their heels. The magistrate didn't hurry on but waited for the other cart. He got down from the cart and with folded hands apologised to Sundaram Iyer for leaving him behind. “Hereafter I will understand whom the people love and esteem. It is a lesson for me and it has made me shed my official pride and learn humility,” he said, and for the rest of the way they kept company.

Once there was a theft in the police inspector's house at Tiruchuzhi. Jewels worth several thousand rupees were stolen. The inspector moved heaven and earth to trace the jewels and the thief, but it was of no avail. The inspector's wife was inconsolable. She repeatedly requested her husband to seek the help of Sundaram Iyer. The inspector was too proud to heed her advice. Days passed and the inspector became desperate. Unwillingly he approached Sundaram Iyer, told him the facts and appealed to him to help him in tracing the criminal. Sundaram Iyer protested, saying that where he had failed what could a poor non-official do? Sundaram Iyer knew too well what it was to try to help the police. It was quite likely that the inspector would turn against him and all those who helped him and would charge them with complicity in the crime. The inspector swore by all that he held holy and sacred and ultimately prevailed upon Sundaram Iyer to agree to help him.

Word went round that the vakil swami would like the offender to return the jewels. They were soon brought intact and left in the custody of Sundaram Iyer. In the dead of night, they were placed on the doorstep of the inspector's house and men secretly mounted guard upon them from the opposite house until dawn. Early in the morning the inspector's wife opened the door and, to her amazement, she found her box with the jewels intact inside it.

The Raja of Ramnad happened to camp at Tiruchuzhi to arrange for the work of reclamation and renovation of the sacred shrine of Bhuminatha at Tiruchuzhi. All the officials and local worthies called upon him and paid their respects. The Raja had heard about Sundaram Iyer and he was anxious to make his acquaintance and invite his cooperation in the task he had undertaken. The Raja was thoroughly disappointed when Sundaram Iyer did not call on him even though he had camped at Tiruchuzhi for three days and three nights. Towards the end of the third day, the Raja sent for Sundaram Iyer. The Raja asked him why he alone had not cared to call on him when all the other important people had done so and whether he had in any way offended him. Sundaram Iyer replied that he did not think of calling on the Raja because he was a man of humble status who considered himself not worthy of the Raja's notice. The Raja was overjoyed to meet this great man who in his humility did not realise his own importance and that nothing could be done at Tiruchuzhi without him. The Raja requested Sundaram Iyer to cooperate with him in his efforts to renovate the temple. The work went on and he proved to be of great help to the Raja.
Steadfast Service

By Prof K. Swaminathan

SINCE Wordsworth complained, "The world is too much with us", the pace of our getting and spending has grown so fast that we seem to have lost the dimension of depth. The poets love Nature and mythology and are at home in the past as the present, in the imaginary as the actual work.

The sacred trees described in Hebrew, Hindu and Norse mythology offer for our contemplation images of growth in time, organic unity in diversity and unselfish service. At the end of Chapter 22 in Book X of the Bhagavata the Lord extolled these blessed beings:

"They live and grow for others' good.
Fierce blows of sun and wind and rain
They take themselves and ward off from us.
Those that seek their shelter find
No harsh unkindness, no refusal.
With arms outstretched they welcome guests.
With leaf and flower and fruit and shade,
With root and bark and hard heart-wood,
With fragrant gums and tender shoots,
With many parts man's many needs
It is their nature to fulfil.
Their birth and growth and death are all
A sacrifice unlimited.
From these friends let us learn to spend
Our life, our wealth, our thought and deed
In silent joy for others' good."

Thus towards the Jumna stream he walked
Through the thick avenue of trees
Laden with foliage, flower and fruit.

The 15th Chapter of the Gita describes a topsy-turvy tree, rooted in the heavens and growing downwards into time and space. This human tree lives its life both by ascent of sap

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, April 1971.
and descent of spirit. Rooted in svadharma, in its own physical and social soil, it is exposed eternally to the sun of reality and the moon-mind reflecting its light.

To seek and find this inner self, the pearl of great piece, we are told to imitate the diver who has no eyes for beauty of sky and landscape or the play of light and shade on the sea's surface, but who, holding breath and speech, plunges straight down to the bottom. For a few pregnant moments he knows only one dimension, depth.

To discover one's svadharma too, it is wise to plunge into one's present duty, without too much looking before or after or afar. This obligation to accept and serve one's surroundings, the charming sweetness of svadharma, is well illustrated by Booker T. Washington in his speech at the Atlanta Exposition:

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, 'Water, water; we die of thirst!' The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, 'Cast down your bucket where you are.' A second time the signal, 'Water, water; send us water!' ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, 'Cast down your bucket where you are.' And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, 'Cast down your bucket where you are.' The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River... I would say, "Cast down your bucket where you are!"

When God is recognized as immanent as well as transcendent, brightness of joy emerges from any task well done and from any happy human relationship. In verse 29 of Upadesa Saram Sri Bhagavan speaks of steadfast service as abiding in the state of bliss beyond bondage and release.

In the tenth sutra of Meikandar's Sivajnana Bodham (a Saiva Siddhanta classic), the tradition of steadfast service is summed up both as the fruit of a good life and the seed of a better one. When His light shines on us, work ceases to be work. The right hand of the eternal goodness feels no strain and claims no credit. Appar, the supreme poet of dasya bhava (attitude of service) declares, "His duty is to support His slave. My duty is to serve and be content." The sweetest singer among the sixtythree saints, he found his joy in work and the feet of his Master in those he loved and served. He says:

As fire in fuel or butter in milk, the jewel of light stands hidden. Plant the rod of kinship and, with the rope of feeling, churn and churn away. And there He shines in front!

The kinship is nothing tentative or temporary, nothing conditional on a quid pro quo. Complete surrender is imaged by the royal devotee, Kulasekhara, who says, "Though you
seem to slay me, yet will I trust in you.” Suffering and sorrow are only passing shadows and
cannot alter the loyal love of the king who sings:

Even if You do not stop giving me pain, I will cling to Your Feet as the child clings to its
mother though she may push it away in a fit of anger; as the chaste wife clings to her
husband though he may misbehave; as the patient clings to the surgeon who cuts and
cauterises his flesh; as a bird clings to the ship’s mast in mid-ocean; as wealth clings to one
who spurns it but loves You!

The unchanging certitude of loyalty is figured in the leaven which “a woman took and
hid in three measures of meal,” the drop of curd in a pot full of milk. The slightest element,
remaining itself and refusing to give up its virtue, converts the rest to the same quality.
Where failure in human relations occurs, the explanation is to be sought in oneself. As
St. Paul says: “All things work together for good to them that love God.”

The ideal of the steadfast servant, so dear and familiar to Tamil students, has been de­
scribed again by Sri Muruganar, the greatest of contemporary Tamil poets, who recreates for
us all the beauty of our older poetry. Obeying its living idiom and prosody, he brings out
with clarity and emphasis the prayerful mood of a man of action turning to a higher power
away from the threats and temptations offered by superficial, though apparently dynamic
programmes.

Here is a rough rendering of Muruganar’s Irai Pani Nital (Steadfastness in the Lord’s
service):

Whichever way I went
I heard your praise, O Happy One
And to your feet surrendered
My body, wealth and life.
I cried:
“Ocean of virtue, mountain-high,
Show me the way to happiness.”
Ramana just, majestic, said:
“Stand still. Stay where you are.”

Digging or soaring, Vishnu and Brahma
Could find you not at all.
And I trudging, trudging towards divers goals,
Was worn thin.
I cried:
"Tell me how to merge in the Feet
Beyond the knowledge of life."
Said Ramana pure, secure:
"Be still. Rest as you are."

Passing, passing through various births,
Driven on and on by the force of deeds,
I cried:
"Show me the way, my Friend, my Master,
Show me the way to reach you."
Said Ramana, Lord of Wisdom and Welfare:
"Be not angry; be not glad.
Gather your mind to oneness,
And be guided by the Grace of the Lord."

Like a picture sprawling on paper,
Rootless I ramified
And cried:
"Tell me how to cut the surface."
Ramana, Master of Wisdom, said:
"Steady and bright,
Like the flame in a pitcher,
Burn in the grace of the Lord.
Be still. Fulfil His Will."

I cried:
"Lord and Master, tell me how
To make good deeds prevail
Against deluding evil deeds."
My Father dear, my Ramana said:
"Undesiring, unabhorring,
Untroubled in the centre standing,
Move only as you may be moved
By the Grace of the Lord."
I cried:
“Mighty Master of Works,
Creating, preserving, destroying,
Tell me the means of salvation.”
Ramana, wise and virtuous, said:
“Watching word and thought,
Walk as you are guided
By the Grace of the Lord who dwells
In the lotus of your heart.”

I cried:
“Tell me how to end
The strong, inveterate deeds
That torment and force me back
Into the torrid current of births.”
Said Ramana, best and brightest of teachers:
“Walking the straight path fixed of old.
Join and be enjoined by
The Grace of the Lord of joyous awareness.”

I cried:
“O rain cloud with compassion big!
Teach me truly the trick
Of escaping alive from the flood of births.”
Said Ramana, Lord of Wisdom and Welfare:
“Like not, loath not true nor false.
Stand in the centre and be
Impelled by the Grace of the Lord.”

I cried:
“All forms I see are forms of You.
Yet none of the Gods know you aright.
Tell me firmly what to do!”
Said Ramana, Lord of Wisdom and Welfare:
"A way there is to escape
The hungry current of births,
To reach the shore and be safe.
Join and be one with.
The Grace of the Lord."

I cried:
"Best of Masters! You who shone
In the kurunda tree's cool shade.
To teach your devotee of Vaadavur,
Full and clear, lay bare to me
The secret of Self-knowledge!"
Said Ramana, my Father, my King:
"Be as you are, your Self!"

THE STORY OF A RELIGIOUS BIGOT
(As told by Sri Ramakrishna)

There was a man who worshipped Siva, but hated all other deities. One day Siva appeared to him and said, "I shall never be pleased with you so long as you hate the other gods." But the man was inexorable. After a few days Siva again appeared to him. This time he appeared as Hari Hara, that is, one side of his body was Siva, and the other Vishnu.

At this the man was half pleased and half displeased. He laid his offerings on the side representing Siva, but nothing on that of Vishnu. When he offered the burning incense to his beloved God (Siva), he was audacious enough to press the nostrils of Vishnu lest he should have the fragrance! Siva was displeased and at once vanished from his sight. But the man was undaunted as ever.

However, the children of the village began to tease him by uttering the name of Vishnu in his hearing. Vexed with this, the man hung two bells on his ears, which he used to ring as soon as the boys cried out the name of Vishnu, in order to prevent the sound entering his ears. And thus he was known by the name of Ghanta-karna. He is still so much hated for his bigotry that every year at a certain time children in Bengal break his effigy with a cudgel.

— Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.
Madhvacharya

By Raman

MADHVA, or Madhvacharya, is the founder and exponent of Dvaita (the doctrine of dualism), one of the three most influential orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy, which are based on the Vedanta.

Broadly speaking, Advaita, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita, the three most prominent schools of Vedantic thought, differ in their perception of the relation of the universal Self to the individual self. According to Shankara, Brahman is transcendent and non-dual. The universal Self is identical with the individual self. Ramanuja says that the individual self is eternally one with the universal self but also different from it. That is, the inseparability of Brahman and jiva does not mean their identity. According to Madhva the two are eternally different. The entire disparateness of the individual and universal souls is the cornerstone of Madhva’s philosophy.

From a purely doctrinal angle, Madhva and Shankara are poles apart. And, Madhva has his differences with Ramanuja also. Notwithstanding this, it should not be forgotten that the three acharyas, without exception, accept only the Veda and the prasthanatraya—Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita—as authoritative. This is the common factor between the three systems. And not stopping with metaphysical formulations, they have also provided guidance in detail for performance of rituals, particularly in temples and maths. This comprehensive guidance has kept alive the flame of religion and spirituality in India.

The followers of Madhvacharya are called madhvas. The spiritual leadership of the madhva community is vested in, or rather divided among eight acharyas (pontiffs). These pontiffs come in a direct, unbroken line of succession from a group of eight sannyasins originally chosen by Madhvacharya himself. By turns these pontiffs who have their own maths take charge of the Sri Krishna temple at Udupi established by Madhva. The term of each acharya is limited to two years. The rituals at this temple are extremely elaborate.

Born into a Tulu Brahmana family at Pajaka Kshetra (Pajaka village) near Udupi in South Kanara District of Karnataka, South India, as the third child of Madhyageha Bhatta, Madhva was originally named Vasudeva. But, after he renounced the world he assumed the sannyasin name of Purna Prajna (‘the completely enlightened’). In his writings, however, he calls himself Ananda Tirtha.

The birth of Madhva is attributed to the grace of Lord Ananteshvara (of Udupi) in response to the fervent prayers of Madhyageha Bhatta for being blessed with a child.
In those days the temples of Chandramoulisvara and Anantesvara were the principal ones at Udupi. Although the Siva Linga was installed in them, they were deemed as temples dedicated to Vishnu. Accordingly, the thousand names of Siva as well as Vishnu used to be chanted therein. Madhyagcha Bhatta was very learned in itihases and puranas. It is also noteworthy that the pandits at Udupi like Bhatta, although essentially Vaishnavites, were profoundly influenced by the Advaita philosophy of Shankaracharya.

While yet a small boy, Madhva once ventured into the deep forest all alone and worshipped Lord Narayana in the temple at Kaduvoor. In like manner he also went to the Siva temple at Bannange. He then went to Udupi for worshipping Anantesvara. The life of the acharya is full of such unusual episodes, reflecting his rare courage and faith in Narayana.

Madhva was extremely good at his studies and his Vedic recitation was also of high standard. He often corrected elders when they committed errors. Madhva was initiated into sannyasa by Achyutapreksha when he was about sixteen, in spite of the reluctance of his parents to agree to (this change of life). Achyutapreksha appears to have been an Advaitin. His lessons to Madhva consequently were Advaitic in content. Differences began to crop up between him and Madhva on doctrinal points.

In recognition of his vast learning he was now given another name, Ananda Tirtha. He seems to have engaged himself for some years in contentious debates with various scholars and took upon himself the task of refuting the tenets of Advaita Vedanta. Hence he was asked by Achyutapreksha as well as other scholars to reduce his views to writing and produce a commentary that could equal Shankara’s commentary on the Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana.

Accompanied by Achyutapreksha his teacher, Madhva went on a tour of South India. After his return to Udupi he went on pilgrimage again. This time he went up North and reached Badarikashrama. He is reported to have communesed with Veda Vyasa at Badarikashrama, where he has a permanent invisible presence and obtained his blessings.

Madhva then wrote a commentary on the Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana. He returned to the South after winning over several scholars in debate. Returning to Udupi he explained his commentary on the Vedanta Sutras to all, including his guru Achyutapreksha. It is stated that the latter was highly impressed by the arguments of Madhva and also became his disciple.

The next important event and of course the most outstanding of all of them in the life of the acharya was the founding of the temple of Sri Krishna at Udupi. He chanced to come across an idol of Sri Krishna embedded within a ball of gopi chandana paste. He had it cleaned. It is stated that he carried it singlehanded to the math. This was a great physical feat!

This idol in bala rupa (Sri Krishna as a child) was originally worshipped by the
gopikas at Dwaraka and also by Rukmini Devi, consort of Sri Krishna.

He went on a pilgrimage to Badarikashrama again. After his return to Udupi from the trip he does not seem to have undertaken any lengthy tour. He devoted his time to writing and debating on Vedantic themes.

A significant contribution of Madhvacarya was the founding of the eight maths at Udupi headed by sannyasins of his choice. These maths function actively to this day.

After completion of this great task Madhva did some more writing. His organisation of his followers into a compact community was now accomplished. His earthly life came to an end. There is no clear account about the exact manner of his passing away.

It is generally believed that Madhva lived up to the ripe old age of seventynine. Whereas Narayana Pandita, author of Madhva Vijaya, states that Madhva lived during period 1238-1317 AD., some Western scholars assign the period 1199-1278 AD.

The philosophy of Madhva is essentially theistic and he identifies the personal God Narayana with the Brahman of the Upanishads. According to him, the Vedas have, as their main purpose the adoration of Vishnu or Narayana, the glorification of His infinite auspicious qualities.

The essence of Madhva's system lies in its postulation of three eternal, ontological orders, namely, Ishvara (God), jiva (individual soul) and prakriti (inanimate nature).

God or Narayana is the Supreme Reality and the only independent category. The other categories are real, but entirely dependent upon Him. The Lord is svatantra (independent or self-dependent) whereas the souls and the world are asvatantra or paratatna (dependent). In short, God is the 'Real of reals'.

The implication is that God is changeless, he is not subject to transformation. He affects the world. But, He is unaffected by the world.

Madhva's standpoint is that of pure dualism which means essentially that there is a permanent distinction, an unbridgeable gap, between Ishvara and jiva. But his dualism is more elaborate in scope and works out to a fivefold set of distinctions.

The five great distinctions are between: (i) God and soul; (ii) soul and soul; (iii) God and inanimate nature (material substance); (iv) material substance and material substance and (v) soul and material substance.

According to Madhva the world experience is real. All objects perceived by us are real. The objects are apprehended just as they are. Dreams and recollections are also real. The world is external to us and has an independent existence all its own.

According to Shankara the world appears external to us, due to ignorance. Such manifestation may be likened to a dream. On the reality being known, one sees only oneself and there is no second. That is, the world has no reality, by itself. Thus, Advaita upholds the absolutist standpoint of the
*Upanishads* by postulating a single reality, explaining the universe as its appearance.

Hence, the *Dvaita* view on the reality of the world runs counter to that of *Advaita*.

Souls are atomic in size according to Madhva and no two souls are alike in character. Also, their nature (*swarupa*) is unchangeable. *Moksha*, liberation is the result of the Lord's Grace. *Bhakti*, love for the lord, is the road to liberation and this should be cultivated by means of ceremonial purity and ethical perfection.

God is the efficient cause of the universe but He is not the material cause. The *acharya* considers it blasphemous to impose the imperfections or impurities of the universe on the Lord who is purity itself, and hence arises his refusal to accept the idea that God is the material cause (of the universe).

Some limited parallelism may be pointed out between *Dvaita* and the systems of *Vishishtadvaita*, *Nyaya Vaisheshika* and *Sankhya*. However the dissimilarities between them (*Dvaita* on the one hand, and the other three systems on the other) outnumber the similarities.

Taking for example the subject of the supremacy of *Ishvara*, or the personal God Narayana, this is asserted by Ramanuja as well as Madhva. However, for Ramanuja *Ishvara* is the material cause of the universe — in addition to his being the efficient cause. For Madhva He is only the efficient cause. Ramanuja teaches that all *jivas* are basically alike. Madhva, however, holds that each *jiva* is unique. Even the realisation that the *jivas* achieve is not similar. It varies according to their spiritual capacity, or eligibility. Examining in this manner, we see that *dvaita* has a unique standpoint as well as a stature all its own.

According to Madhva, souls are of three types. The first category consists of those who are initially bound like others, but achieve liberation in the future. But even such souls get liberation in accordance with their *swarupa yogyata* (intrinsic nature). This *swarupa yogyata* persists even in the state of *moksha*. That is, the innate bliss that is enjoyed on release is not the same for all souls. This is known as *ananda taratamya* (gradation in the nature and intensity of bliss). The second category (of souls) are destined to eternal transmigration — from one life to another. There is a third category of souls who are doomed to life in hell for ever. This doctrine of predestination to eternal punishment is an unusual feature — peculiar to the philosophy of Madhva. This view is not shared by most schools of Hindu thought. Summarising the whole concept of *moksha*, we can say that Madhva does not subscribe to the concept of universal redemption.

Madhva has written extensively and given his interpretation of the *Rig Veda*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavata* and the *Prashhanatraya*. The prominent works among them are: (i) *Gita Bhashya*, a commentary on the *Gita* which is supported by its elucidation known as *Gita Tatparya*; (ii) Commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras* of Badarayana supplemented by *Anu Vyakhyana*, a further elucida-
MADHVACHARYA

MADHVACHARYA

tion and (iii) Dasopanishad Bhashya. He has left us thirtyseven works in all.

Madhva's style is characterised by brevity and hence we are also indebted to his successors, especially Jaya Tirtha and Vyasa Tirtha, for their elaborate, standard treatises explaining the doctrine (of Madhva).

The differing standpoints of the three systems of Vedanta appear to be irreconcilable. However, they make little difference to a sadhaka.

One intent on sadhana is sure to make progress. This has been explained by Sri Ramakrishna as follows:

The master accepted all the doctrines of non-dualism (Advaita), qualified non-dualism (Vishishtadvaita) and dualism (Dvaita). But he used to say, “these three doctrines are accepted by the human mind according to the stage of its progress. In one stage of the mind dualism finds acceptance; the other two are then felt to be wrong. In a higher stage of spiritual progress the doctrine of qualified non-dualism is regarded as true; one then feels that the Reality which in Itself is eternally devoid of attributes exists in sport as always possessed of attributes. One then cannot but feel that not only is dualism wrong but there is no truth in non-dualism also. Finally, when man reaches the ultimate limit of spiritual progress with the help of sadhana, he experiences the nirma nature of the Divine Mother and remains in oneness with Her. All the ideas, such on ‘I’ and ‘you’ subject and object, bondage and liberation, vice and virtue, merit and demerit, else are then all merged in one.”

Bhagavan Sri Ramana always lays stress on the common factors between differing systems of thought. His observations are in the nature of practical guidance to the sadhaka.

A brief dialogue is reproduced below:

Devotee: If Advaita is final, why did Madhvacharya teach Dvaita?

Maharshi: Is your Self Dvaita or Advaita? All systems agree on Self-surrender. Attain it first, then there will be time to judge whose view is right or otherwise.

The teaching of Madhvacharya is summarised in the following verse of Vyasaraya:

In the religion of Sri Madhva Hari is the Supreme Being. The world of multiplicity is an ultimate reality. The jivas are different from these and among themselves. They are the servants of Hari, and there are distinctions of high and low among them. Liberation consists in the enjoyment of the bliss that is inherent in oneself. Pure devotion is the means of attaining it. There are three pramanas (criteria for determining truth), namely, perception, inference and revealed scripture. The sole purport of the entire Vedic revelation is Hari.

1 Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, p.444, Madras Edn. (1983).
2 Talk No. 282, Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, p. 241 (1968 Edn.).
Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati,
Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sarada Pitam

By M. Ravindra Narayanan

SRI CHANDRASEKHARA BHARATI, Shankaracharya of the Sringeri Sarada Pitha, was an outstanding spiritual personality of recent times. He was the thirty-fourth pontiff of the Sringeri Math, one of the four established by Adi Shankara.

He was born on October 16, 1892, as the twelfth child of Gopala Sastri and Lakshmi Amma, who lived in Sringeri. It was an Ekadasi day, according to the Hindu calendar. His original name was Narasimha. Gopala Sastri and Lakshmi Amma had the singular misfortune of losing all the children born before Narasimha. They felt that if the boy lived separately from them, he could escape the cruel hand of death. They therefore entreated Srikanta Sastri, the Sarvadhikari of the Sringeri Math, to take him under his care. Srikanta Sastri accepted Narasimha into his household. The lad was admitted to a local Kannada school. He proved to be a good student. He was next admitted to the Sanskrit school, Sadvidya Sanjivani Pathasala at Sringeri. This was on the advice of Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Narasimha Bharati, the ruling pontiff of Sringeri.

In 1911, Sri Narasimha Bharati had started a school in Bangalore for higher studies in Sanskrit. Highly impressed by the lad Narasimha's progress in studies, the pontiff asked Narasimha to join the Bangalore school and study Mimamsa as a preliminary to the study of Vedanta. From the way he groomed the lad it was clear that the pontiff wanted Narasimha to succeed him. When Narasimha came to take leave of him on the eve of his departure for Bangalore, the Mahaswami composed three benedictory verses by way of blessing, wherein, he exhorted the young lad to take to the ascetic way of life.

At Bangalore too, Narasimha excelled in his studies.

In 1912, Sri Narasimha Bharati Mahaswami fell ill and knew that his end was near. He felt that he had to appoint his successor and announce the decision officially. He instructed one of his intimate devotees and an official of the math, Rama Sastri, to hasten to Bangalore and bring Narasimha to Sringeri. Rama Sastri was also asked to intimate the choice of successor to the Maharaja of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar.

Rama Sastri after securing the approval of the Maharaja of Mysore, proceeded to the Shankara math, Bangalore, to intimate Narasimha and his parents and to bring the lad to Sringeri. Narasimha was surprised and overwhelmed. However, he resolved to obey
the command of the Acharya, to take to a life of sannyasa. Now, Rama Sastrī had to convince Narasimha’s parents. But, however much he tried, Rama Sastrī could not convince Gopala Sastrī and Lakshmi Amma. This was because he was their only surviving son. Narasimha told his parents that he himself did not want to live a worldly life and that his inclinations were otherwise. The mother begged of her son to reconsider his decision since she and her husband had no other support in life. Narasimha had to use all his persuasive powers to convince her of the inevitability of the situation. He eventually managed to obtain the consent of his parents.

Narasimha then left for Sringeri with Rama Sastrī. He could reach Sringeri only on the 21st March. Sri Sachidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati Mahaswami had shed his mortal coil the previous day itself. Narasimha’s grief knew no bounds. Gone was the opportunity to sit at that Mahatma’s feet and serve him! Nevertheless, he had to fulfill the master’s wishes of administering the Pitha. The final obsequies of Sri Narasimha Bharati were carried out in all solemnity.

On the 7th April 1912, Narasimha was given sannyasa diksha and anointed the 34th Pithadhipati of the Sringeri math. Gopala Sastrī and Lakshmi Amma unfortunately, could not participate in the event, since they could arrive at Sringeri from Bangalore only the next day.

Sri Chandrasekharā Bharati on assuming the Pithadhipati, invited Virupaksha Sastrī, a highly respected scholar in the Vedas and sastras to Sringeri, in order to acquire thorough knowledge in Vedanta and other sastras. The scholar was the Swami’s teacher. The Swami’s position as the Jagadguru demanded that even his teacher should prostrate to him before beginning the lessons. When Virupaksha Sastrī entered the Swami’s quarters to commence lessons, the Swami would however get up on some pretext, so that the teacher would actually be prostrating to Sri Narasimha Bharati’s portrait which was behind. Such was the Swami’s simplicity!

Sri Chandrasekharā Bharati’s intellectual stature was very high; he made rapid progress in his studies. For four years the Swami studied with Virupaksha Sastrī, by which time he acquired thorough proficiency in Vedanta. Sri Chandrasekharā Bharati was by nature soft and gentle, qualities which he further developed. He also increasingly developed dispassion and discrimination. He was a natural poet and his poetic outpourings during this period were full of beauty and feeling. Everyday he would worship the sandals of his Guru Sri Narasimha Bharati and remember him with gratitude. He composed verses in praise of the Sivabhinava, in many of which he pleads for the Guru’s blessings to get rid of desires and attachment to the body. In the year 1916, Sri Chandrasekharā Bharati consecrated the Saradamba temple at the Sringeri Math, renovation work for which had been started by his Guru.

Sri Chandrasekharā Bharati, throughout the initial periods of his reign, sought the
Saradamba
peaceful and serene atmosphere of Narasimha Vana, immersing himself in tapas. The math authorities were worried over what they perceived as the Swami’s inexplicable mental state. Shy, reticent and retiring by nature, the Swami found contentment and peace in the inner recesses of his heart. The outside world, however, thought otherwise. The math authorities drew up plans for a tour by Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati. Left to himself, the saint would have loved to live in seclusion and continue his intense tapas. However, he had to respect the traditions of the math, an important part of which was going on yatras, reaching out to the devotees and the general public and organising and attending to whatever was necessary for upholding the Vedic dharma. In the year 1924, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati agreed to leave Sringeri for the first time in twelve years after ascension to the Pitha and go on yatra.

Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati first visited Mysore, where he was given a reverential and enthusiastic welcome by the Mysore royal family and the devout public. The Maharaja, Krishnarajendra Wodeyar was himself a spiritual person besides being a great scholar and enlightened administrator. The Swami inaugurated a memorial for his Guru, the Sivabhinava, constructed on the site of the latter’s birthplace. A marble statue of the Guru was installed and plans finalised to conduct regular discourses on the sastras and higher studies in Vedanta.

Later the Swami visited Nanjangud, Satyamangalam, Coimbatore, Trichy, Tirunelveli and Trivandrum before finally arriving at Kaladi, the birthplace of Adi Shankara. This hallowed land was discovered by Sri Narasimha Bharati. The consecration of this shrine was done in 1910. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati gave a fillip to religious activities at Kaladi by inaugurating an agrahara for Vedic pandits and establishing a Vedanta Patusala, where scholars could debate and conduct research on Vedanta. After staying for a few days at Kaladi, giving darshan to devotees and discoursing on dharma, religion and philosophy, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati returned to Sringeri in December 1927. This four year tour served to bring the Sringeri math and its ideals closer to the people. It also gave people the opportunity to know their Acharya and many benefited out of his darshan.

As soon as he returned from his tour Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati began frequenting Narasimha Vana; he resumed his intense tapas.

Though he went about his normal chores, the Swami’s mind was not on them. He would begin abhisheka to the deity and do it endlessly without thought of time; he would hold a flower in his hand for hours together without offering it to the deity; he would repeat a particular mantra several times without going to the next; sometimes he walked away in the middle of the puja without informing anyone and a math official would have to finish the puja.

As months went by, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati grew more and more indrawn. He stopped performing puja and did not show any interest in the day to day administration
of the math. He also stopped teaching students who came to him to learn the bhashyas and Vedanta. He stopped giving darshan to devotees. In short, he totally cut off all contact with the outside world. The Swami would for days on end be immersed in antarmukha, totally oblivious to the world. He did not know the passing of night or day. Sometimes, while moving about in trance, he would recite slokas from Sadasiva Brahmendra’s Arma Vidya Vilasa. Ever immersed in the bliss of the Self, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati became an enigma to the math authorities. The pontiff of Sringeri had to interact with the multitudinous devotees of the math who came for his darshan, to witness puja performed by him and receive tirtha prasad from the Swami’s own hands as well as his blessings. Pandits and scholars expected encouragement and directions from the Swami in their pursuit of Vedic and Vedantic studies and researches. He had to give instructions to math officials on administrative matters. The math authorities felt that Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati was neglecting these duties. In their view the behaviour of the Swami was not only strange and abnormal, it bordered on madness. Therefore they imposed several restrictions on Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati’s movements. He was confined to his room in Narasimha Vana. When the Swami came out of trance, which was rare, he performed puja, gave darshan and taught his students if he so wished. Otherwise, the administrator of the math, Srikanta Sastri performed puja and carried on the general administration of the math.

Srikanta Sastri expressed his apprehensions as well as those of other devotees about the Swami’s ‘mental health’ to the Maharaja of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar. The Maharaja sent his Dewan, Sir Mirza Ismail to Sringeri to study the situation. Later, the Chief of the Government Mental Hospital at Bangalore (now NIMHANS), Dr M. V. Govindaswami, was deputed to Sringeri for the purpose of examining the Swami.

Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati was in antarmukha at Narasimha Vana, therefore the doctor could not meet him. He questioned the math staff and some of Sringeri’s citizens discreetly about the Swami. The doctor stayed for seven days and had still not had the opportunity of meeting the Swami. A day before the doctor was due to leave for Bangalore, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati came out of his antarmukha state and gave darshan to devotees. Dr Govindaswami who was among those gathered in the Swami’s presence, got up and asked for permission to leave the next day. The Swami, with a sweet smile on his lips asked, “Have you completed the work for which you came here?” The doctor was stunned at this question as the Swami had no way of knowing his (doctor’s) arrival or of the nature of his mission. Dr Govindaswami then realised that Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati knew everything and also that nothing was wrong with him. The Swami continued, “Have you finished examining me? Can my disease be cured by your methods? This is my prarabdha and I have to undergo it. You cannot do anything. Therefore, please go home. God will bless you.”
So saying, the Swami gave him prasad and blessed him.

Dr. Govindaswami on his return to Bangalore reported that Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati was quite normal and that the plane of consciousness in which he lived was incomprehensible to the ordinary human mind. There were others — scientists and doctors — who were sent to observe the mental state of Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati. All returned with the firm conviction that he was normal and that his mental state was beyond scientific analysis.

The math officials and close devotees were worried about the reputation of the math. They therefore decided that it was time that a successor to Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati was nominated. The Swami himself was happy and concurred with the suggestion. The thirteen year old Srinivasa of Bangalore was chosen as successor, given the sannyasa name Abhinava Vidyatirtha and anointed junior pontiff of the Sringeri Math on 22 May 1931.

What little connection Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati had with the math was now totally snapped and he lived in Narasimha Vana, ever engaged in tapas, most of the time immersed in antarmukha. For a period of seven years from 1931, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati did tapas at Narasimha Vana. Finally he came out of his seclusion in 1938. News that Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati had come out of his antarmukha state and was giving darshan travelled fast and crowds began pouring into Sringeri. His face shone with the radiance of the sun and people who met him were aware of the power of his towering spirituality. The silent power of the sage drew people from all over the country but Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati loathed crowds. He felt best when left to himself. People came to him with their problems and expected him to solve them. Mundane issues like marriage, jobs, illness and domestic problems were those that were presented by the majority of visitors. The Swami felt constricted. He again began to confine himself to his room and did not come out even when a big crowd was waiting for him.

One day, one of Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati’s close devotees, Krishnaswami Iyer, the author of Dialogues with the Guru, approached the Swami and made bold to ask him as to why he should not give darshan to the people who eagerly sought it. The Swami replied that he was not interested in the worldly problems which were fleeting and were the products of maya; and they were not interested in what he possessed. Therefore, what was the point in giving darshan? Krishnaswami Iyer pleaded that in the crowd there would be at least a handful who might be interested in the highest spiritual goal and who might crave upadesa of the Swami. To which the great Yogi replied, “True, if there is such a person, interested in the truth and wants my help, he will somehow find a way to meet me. Like you who are in my presence now, for example.” This was quite true, because genuine sadhakas who needed the Swami’s guidance invariably succeeded in getting his darshan and guidance.

In response to requests from devotees Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati decided to go on
tour, his second one. Accordingly in 1938 he visited Bangalore and stayed at the Shankara Math for about eight months. He had a temple constructed for Goddess Saradamba in the math premises and performed kumbhabhishekam. He gave lectures on Vedanta which were attended by a large number of ardent devotees.

A day before Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati left Bangalore, a close devotee was moved to tears. When the Swami questioned him, the devotee replied that in all these days he had become attached to the Swami, his Guru, and now he could not bear to be separated from him. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati asked him, “Who is that Guru who has given you such joy?” “Yourself, your Holiness”, replied the devotee. The Swami observed, “Then, I have no right to call myself a Guru. If this is what I have taught you, then it is better that you miss my presence. It is obvious that you consider this body as your Guru. If I have taught you that this body is the Guru then I am utterly useless. In reality the body has got nothing to do with Atma, the true Guru. The Atma is beyond time and space, beyond arrival or departure.” The devotee understood the truth. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati believed in imparting to his devotees nothing less than the highest truth of the Vedanta.

After a few days’ stay at Nanjangud the Swami proceeded straight to Kaladi. Here, the Swami found the quiet and peace conducive to his tapas and spent most of his time in communion with the Self. It was at Kaladi that he began writing his famous commentary on Shankara’s Viveka Chudamani. Thousands had his darshan and benefitted. The Swami then decided to return to Sringeri after staying at Kaladi for ten months. It was 1940.

For about five years after this, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati led a normal life. He taught Shankara’s bhashyas and Vedanta to some select disciples, contributed articles on religion to a math journal, held scholarly discussions with pandits and granted interviews to genuine seekers. But he did not involve himself in the affairs of the math.

Again, sometime in 1946, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati went into seclusion at Narasimha Vana. He snapped contact with the outside world, yet people went to Sringeri in large numbers to have his darshan. They waited for weeks just to have a glimpse, though it might be from a distance, of his smiling visage. A smile or a nod from him was enough to fill their hearts with peace. Many people have reported that by a mere darshan of the great Swami, their problems have been solved. Thus flew six years.

The Last Years

It was 1952. The math authorities and Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati’s devotees planned to celebrate the sixtieth birthday of the Swami in a grand manner. The Swami firmly turned down their request. He could not bring himself to allow an event that celebrated his body which he considered to be false. The Swami finally agreed, for the only reason that Ati Rudra and Sahasra Chandi homas which were beneficial to the world at large would be performed on the occasion.
The yagnas were conducted in April 1953, months after the Swami’s actual birthday; the Swami did not take part in them. He did not stir from his retreat at Narasimha Vana, but he gave darshan to the thousands of devotees who had assembled for the yagnas. In the year 1954, the Swami was his usual self and more accessible to devotees. He also participated in the Vinayaka sadas held on the occasion of Vinayaka Chaturthi — something which he had never done for a long time.

Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati was particularly genial and gracious with everyone during the year 1954. People were surprised, as they witnessed the Swami call each of his attendants and the math staff and enquire of their welfare and of their family. With kindness and solicitude he spoke to devotees and blessed them. When a devotee wrote to him as to when he could have his darshan, the Swami wrote back saying he could come immediately, certainly before Mahalaya Amavasya, which in that year fell on 26 September.

On 25 September, he handed over the books in his possession to the librarian and spoke to all devotees who sought his presence. In the evening he stood before the Samadhi of his Guru, the great Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati for sometime. He ate a frugal meal that evening and retired for the night but did not sleep. Every now and then he got up and went round his Guru’s Samadhi several times and repeated slokas from Sadasiva Brahmendra’s poem, Atma Vidya Vilasa and chanted other stotras.

On September 26, 1954, well before dawn, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati started for the river Tunga for his bath. His attendant reminded him that hot water was ready for his bath. It was dark and rainy. The Swami said, “Today is a punya divasa (holy day) being Mahalaya Amavasya. Let us bathe in the river”, and unmindful of the drizzle, went down to the river. The attendant rushed behind with clothes for the Swami. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati descended the steps and went into the river. The attendant had begun washing clothes with his back turned to the Swami. The Swami had a dip in the cool waters of the Tunga and sat on a stone slab for his pranayama. The next minute the attendant heard a loud thud and splash of water. Turning round he saw the Swami’s body, in padmasana, floating downstream. Stunned, he screamed for help, dived into the water, went after the body and caught hold of it. Swimming against the water current with the Swami’s body, the attendant repeatedly screamed for help. Presently another assistant who had rushed from the quarters jumped into the water and helped to bring the body to the river bank. It was a quarter past four in the morning. The junior Swami, Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha, math authorities, staff, devotees, all came. Doctors who examined the Swami found not a drop of water inside the body of that Maha Yogi. The face was calm and serene with that ineffable peace reigning. It was iccha marana. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati had of his own accord left his mortal coil.
His body was taken in procession through the streets of Sringeri. Thousands of devotees rushed to Sringeri on hearing the stunning news and paid their tearful homage to Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati. His body was interred at Narasimha Vana next to the Samadhi of his illustrious Guru, Sri Narasimha Bharati. A Samadhi was built and a marble statue was made and consecrated in 1963.

Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati lived the life of a true renunciate. His needs were few and he loathed pomp and show. He always felt that he was first and foremost a sannyasi and that headship of the math was secondary. In accordance with his conviction, he followed the sannyasa dharma, constantly did Atma Vichara and acquired the firsthand experience needed to guide disciples and devotees and dispel their doubts. The Swami unwaveringly and relentlessly pursued his tapas and attained its fruits. It needs to be said that several disciples and devotees had their doubts clarified and were thus able to progress rapidly in their spiritual sadhana through tukkage and interaction with the Swami. A single darshan of the Swami, a smile on his lips, a single nod of his head were enough to elevate a person. People felt ineffable peace and contentment in his presence.

Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati’s silent, unpublicised presence drew thousands of people to Sringeri. He treated everyone alike, whether rich or poor, prince or commoner, whether Hindu or Christian or Muslim. He belonged to the category of saints like Sadasiva Brahmantra, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Seshadri Swami who were avadhutas and who were in their lifetime sometimes categorised as mad by the laity. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati was, nevertheless, understood by those fortunate few whose struggling souls passionately searched for an anchor that would help them cross the ocean of samsara.

Teachings

The Swami always emphasised the necessity for intense practice rather than learned dissertations. He said that one need not have to spend time in extensive study of the sastras, but it was important to catch hold of a single truth expounded therein and apply it in practice. The Swami stressed the need to perform one’s duties without bothering about their fruits. This would purify the mind and prepare one for the greater goal. The Swami was never tired of repeating that performance of nitya karmas like sandhyavandana were important and were not to be given up. It was important to develop an attitude of contentment and detachment, faith in the Guru and God. The Swami’s erudition and scholarship was legendary, yet he used very simple language to explain abstruse points of philosophy. Sometimes a single word or even a gesture was sufficient to dispel the doubts of a seeker. The Swami advised his disciples and devotees to understand and experience the beatitude of the Self rather than indulge in semantics and dialectics. “Leave all those to the scholars. They have to prepare the dishes for others. You confine yourself to the practical enjoyment of the Self”, he would say.
He would also advise devotees to show proper respect to their parents, look after them and attend to their needs.

Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati said that the path of dharma was broad enough to accommodate various beliefs and there was absolutely no necessity to quarrel about the relative merits and demerits of the various paths or faiths. What was important was the practical realisation of the truth. The catholicity, broadmindedness and practical convictions of Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati are brought out in a conversation with a European gentleman, an excerpt of which is given here:

European: Your Holiness, I have been studying your religion for many years now and am fascinated by its various aspects. I wonder if I could convert to Hinduism and if Your Holiness could initiate me!

Swami: Have you studied the aspects of your own religion thoroughly?

European: I am afraid not, but I have, to a certain extent, tried to follow the precepts of Christianity. Unfortunately, I have not been able to meet a genuine spiritual master of Christianity so that I can clarify my doubts.

Swami: In the first place, every human being can be said to belong to Sanatana Dharma or what is today called Hinduism, because of the fact that most of the tenets of other religions are contained in Sanatana Dharma. However, God must have had a purpose in causing you to be born in a particular religion. I also cannot accept your opinion that there do not exist genuine spiritual masters belonging to your own religion. It is not necessary for you to convert to Hinduism in order to realise the truth. Go back and devote your time to study of Christianity in depth. Also, if you sincerely search for spiritual masters within your own religion you will definitely find them and they will solve your doubts in no time.

European: Your Holiness, I am amazed at your catholicity and I do not know how to thank you, but now I go back, determined to live the life of a better Christian.

Once a few disciples were waiting for the Swami to teach them Adi Shankara's bhashyas. The Swami was then engaged in Sri Chakra puja. He was so engrossed in it that he did not notice the passage of time nor the presence of his disciples waiting for him. A devotee who was observing all this thought to himself, "How can His Holiness find pleasure in mechanically offering flowers to the Goddess and how can it be superior to the charm and depth of Shankara's bhashyas?" Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati came out after the puja and while offering prasad to the devotee said, "One of the holy names of Mother Goddess is mithyajagadadhishthana (substratum on which the illusory universe is seen). Do the bhashyas contain anything more than this?" To the Swami the puja was not a mechanical act but a wholly divine endeavour, which, if performed realising its fullest significance, was itself a powerful sadhana leading to Self-realisation.
In another instance, a gentleman from Bengal who came to Sringeri for darshan expected to see Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati in deep samadhi. Instead he observed that the Swami was deeply engrossed in performing puja to the Sri Chakra. After the puja was over the gentleman, albeit in a roundabout way, made bold to question the Swami:

Devotee: If a person has realised the Self can he engage himself in rituals and puja?

Swami: What else do you expect him to do?

Devotee: My point is that, engaging in rituals or performing puja implies doership. Inhering in the Self implies non-doership. How can both conditions exist in the same individual? Is it not inconsistent?

Swami: Can you tell me who the non-doer is?

Devotee: The Self.

Swami: And the doer?

Devotee: The mind, the senses and the body.

Swami: True. Therefore the Self is the non-doer and the doer is the non-Self, right?

Devotee: Yes, Your Holiness.

Swami: It therefore follows that the doer and the non-doer do not exist in the same entity. Where is the inconsistency?

Satsang with the wise and noble, reverence and obedience towards the guru and constant vichara (enquiring into the truth) were the main requisites of sadhana according to Chandrasekhara Bharati. Regular concentration on one’s chosen deity or guru was very important. According to the Swami, desire was the root cause of all suffering. Therefore he exhorted his devotees to conquer desire. Through performance of selfless, desireless action the mind gets purified and atma vichara then comes naturally to the sadhaka. The Swami would say that health which is not preceded by sickness is more natural. Similarly, true happiness is that which is natural and not that which obtains after a period of mental unrest or suffering. Man can be happy by refusing to submit to anything that may disturb his mental equilibrium.

The guidance that Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati gave to a Frenchman on spiritual practice is very useful and can be followed by all. Here is an excerpt from the reply sent by the Swami in response to the request of the Frenchman:

The pursuit of Vedantic truth requires as a preliminary qualification in the seeker that he should have attained a certain degree of spiritual awakening as much as of intellectual acuteness he may have acquired in his previous births. As he advances he may meet with difficulties which he can overcome with the help of a guru. The steadying of one's mind is a sine qua non for realisation. Towards this end, the following practices are advised.

Physical: Avoidance of stimulating food and drink and adoption of a vegetarian diet.
Moral: The daily exercise of universal love towards all beings without any distinction and rendering of useful help to them whenever possible.

Mental: Daily concentration of thought on a single object held in the highest reverence. Concentration may be practised whenever the mind is fresh.

Intellectual: Enquiry should be made everyday and the problems of truth pondered over whenever they occur.

Once a team of football players came to have Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati’s darshan. The Swami after blessing them observed:

A total of twenty-two persons kick a single ball in this game. When one side kicks it, it goes to the other side, but there also it meets with kicks. The ball’s life is full of kicks. Similarly with man. Life is like the game of football. Jiva is the ball. The incidents of life are the kicks. Only when the players are exhausted, the light is insufficient and the play is over that the ball is relegated to the corner. Similarly man puffed with pride moving about in this world with head held high does not get peace of mind or happiness. Only when he relieves himself from unnecessary and useless activities, acquires humility and practises meditation in seclusion, he will become wise and come to possess mental peace.

The inspiring life of Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati proves that it is possible to live the life of the fully enlightened Sage as described in the sastras even in this age which is characterised by atheism, restlessness and deceit.

IN SRI BHAGAVAN’S HALL

Eleanor Pauline Noye

As I entered it (Sri Bhagavan’s hall) I felt the atmosphere was filled with Sri Bhagavan’s purity and blessedness. One feels a breath of the Divine in the sage’s presence. He was sitting on a couch, clad only in a loin-cloth, surrounded by his devotees. When he smiled it was as though the gates of heaven were thrown open. I have never seen eyes more alight with divine illumination, — they shine like stars. He greeted me very tenderly and made some enquiries about me, which put me at ease. His look of love and compassion was a benediction that went straight to my heart. I was immediately drawn to him. His gentleness and kindness is all-embracing. One feels such an uplifting influence in his saintly presence and cannot help but sense his extraordinary spirituality. It is not necessary for him to talk, his silent influence of love and light is more potent than words could ever be. I did not know what manner of man I expected to find. But once I saw him, I said to myself, “Surely, there is no one like Sri Bhagavan!” To see him is to love him.

— Golden Jubilee Souvenir.
THAT Sri Bhagavan was not formally well-read in Vedantic scriptures, is a fact we devotees know from Bhagavan's own statement. This aspect of his mere coincidental acquaintance with the Vedantic works is, I believe yet another evidence supporting the lila of Divinity appearing as devotee, a 'very ordinary man', a common man, amidst us all.

It is given to but a fortunate few to 'read between the lines' of the events of his life, to begin to see the consistent play of Omniscience clothed in human knowledge. The para put on the role of apara, as it were.

Of particular interest are his translations from Sanskrit. One is curious about his 'choice' of Agama among the Vedic lore, Sankara and Vasishtha among the Vedantic lore, and Patanjali among Yogic lore, for translation into Tamil. This is indeed a vast field for research activity that can serve as powerful sadhana. A word of caution here; research of which one must be ever watchful not to turn it into mere pedantry and pomp. And finally, one is curious as to the languages in which he chose to express the Transcendent.

I shall confine myself to a brief survey of the above four areas.

1. The Agamic Devikalottara and Sarvajnanottara abound in the use of the term sunya in a very positive sense. By this I mean that these works are solidly oriented towards Self-knowledge and hence, the practice. They define contemplation, investigation and witnessing, all of which comprise the science of enquiry, as the yoga of the 'great sunya'. They goad the aspirant to 'fix' the mind in the terrain of the all-void (sarva sunya padam). They share the open secret that this sunya is that sense of 'being' laid bare, which everyone refers to as "I" (Dev., v.13). It is the weapon, astra, that can nullify all thought-forms beginning from gross earth all the way up to Sakti (Dev., v.26). And this akasa-like sunya (vyoma vadiabhum sunyam; Dev., v.23) is the 'seed' for mukti. They assure the sadhaka that he would gain the exalted 'place' of nirvana
directly by contemplation of, and in due course, abidance as, that *sarva sunya* (Dev., v.27). These teachings, placed right in the thick, as it were, of Hindu *Agamic* ritual worship, employ *sunya* as the gateway to the *para sunya* (Dev., v.42) the Self, (ie., the *Vedantic Brahman*). This *sunya* terminology, rather unheard of in the *Upanishads* (rare usages do exist, like in *Taittiriya's* 'asad eva idam agra asit'“at first, verily non-being prevailed here”), is widely derived as a consequence of negation (*anatta*, *anichcha*) in Buddhist thought, and thus its presumed residuum of "voidness" or "total absence" has in fact been a great point of alleged divergence between *Vedanta* and Buddhism. *Vedanta* asserts Self-knowledge (*brahman*) as signifying *nirvana*, and its alleged non-use of the term *sunya* is seen as proof of difference with Buddhism which negates all including *atman*. However, the great *Yoga Vasishtha* from which Sri Bhagavan quoted liberally, is very 'comfortable' with the use of both concepts of Being and Non-being — suggesting that this term is really used by the Buddha only in its sense of 'the sense of a self operating in the world' as transient, and that in the reformatory context he was placed in, he preferred the use of the term *sunya* (to the use of *brahman*) as signifying the nature of *nirvana*.

In the *Sarvajnanottara* (v.50-51) where Siva instructs Kartikeya in Self-knowledge, two opposing similes are employed side by side. Verse 50 says that the true knower rises up in *nirvana*, destroying the nescient 'darkness' which is born of illusory ignorance, in just the same way as a lamp spreading light destroys darkness. This is the classic *Vedantic* simile. The very next verse (v.51), uses a simile never used in *Vedantic* terminology. It uses darkness as connoting *nirvana*. The verse says, "As the flame, upon exhaustion of the fuel, assuredly attains to all-dissolving darkness (*nirvana*), so too, the Yogi who remains steady with the current of Self-attention, (exhausts individuality, that is 'the sense of self', and assuredly attains to the all-dissolving *nirvana*).

These *Agamic* texts, it would seem, got themselves chosen for translation by Bhagavan, for him to highlight a forgotten truth linking *Vedanta* and Buddhism! The fact is that the Buddha was a reformer from within the *Vedic* ethos. He brought to the fore the very essentials of the *Vedanta*, leaving aside what in his time had become non-essential outer sheaths and vain speculations. The sense in which the term *sunya* was used by people in those times (and hence by Buddha too) could not have been better conveyed than through these two *Agamic* texts. Bhagavan's divine attention cast on these two texts will undoubtedly initiate a great reunification of the world of Buddhism as a self-correcting mechanism within the *Vedic* fold in the times to come.

2. In the invocatory to Sankara's *Atmabodha*, Bhagavan goes to the extent of declaring that it is the same Sankara who spoke then that speaks now. At the same time, to steer clear of polemics, especially from arm-chair *advaitins* who were ignorant of the fact that *advaita* was not a school of thought, but an insight of Truth, transcending thought,
Bhagavan, as if sitting on the fence, did emphasize that he did not advocate any particular view, *advaita* or otherwise, and that he approved of all schools and approaches.

How can anyone ignore the fact that Sankara’s original works occupy pride of place even by sheer numbers among the texts chosen for translation by Bhagavan. No other single author was translated so extensively by Bhagavan. While *Vivekachudamani* and *Drdgdrsviveka* were rendered into the long-winded, meditation-inducing, and very beautiful *manipravala* prose, the *Atma Bodha* and the smaller but very well known *Dakshinamurti Stotra* by Sankara, and *Hastamalaka*, and the *Gurustuti* by His disciples, were all, I dare say, ‘improved upon’ in Bhagavan’s Tamil translation. A very small example would suffice to clarify this point.

Comparing the translations of the last three poems mentioned above, we find that Bhagavan adds an adjective (not found in the Sanskrit originals), qualifying the Self, in the last line of each and every verse. Also, Bhagavan employs a different adjective in the last line of each verse. It would seem as if Siva Arunachala, as Sankara wished very much to ornament his poems further in Tamil translation, and fulfilled this desire through Ramana, who is himself his ‘translation’!

Siva as Sankara, the One that saw no ‘other’, and to whom bondage, *sadhana*, and consequent *mukti* are all the *maya* of mind, nevertheless left behind a massive body of poems, commentaries on the *suktis*, and instruction manuals for the seekers of *mukti*, for all time to come! His advent was one of establishing through debate, *by travelling throughout the length and breadth of Bharat*, that the *Vedas* accommodated all types of approaches (selfish, communal, altruistic and transcendental) due to varied levels of evolution in spirit, and that the *Vedic* passages could be seen as consistent (*i.e.* free from contradiction) *only when their inner motherly purpose was understood*. The simile of the sugar-coated pill given by the mother for the child’s recovery from fever, clarifies this approach. The *Kavvalya Navanita* simile of the guru answering the seeker’s reference to a plant’s tip, by calling it now “a bud”, and then revising it later as “a flower”, and then as if retracting all his earlier statements by calling it, “a fruit”, tells it all.

Arunachala, as Bhagavan, the One that saw no ‘other’, and to whom bondage, *sadhana*, and consequent *mukti* are all the *maya* of mind, nevertheless moved as Daksinamurti amidst humanity for over five decades, allowing access to himself, *at all times, and without any human intermediary*. Ever established in the *sahaja nirvikalpa* *samadhi*, he made himself available to who- evers sought him out; and in the palpable Peace of His Presence, gave a ‘taste of Self’ in a direct silent initiation, which laid bare the ego, dissolving the thick clouds of attendant thoughts.

3. The work *Self Enquiry* in prose by Bhagavan, though not as well known as his *Who Am I?* or *Upadesa Saram*, is destined to become for *Jnana Yoga*, as much of a classic as Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* are for *Raja Yoga*. This work puts all of *pranopasana* and
sagunopasana of the Raja Yoga in proper, vital niches, in the 'overall scheme'. It also consigns with the voice of authority, murtipuja and murtidhyana, and the meditations on shadchakras to the level of practices meant for the tyro yogin.

Bhagavan makes a statement here (Chapter VI; Brahma Vidya) that is quite unusual for him. He ends the instruction on a cryptic note: "What more can be said? One must infer and understand". The wise student must infer even from this that Bhagavan did consider eligibility, ie. adhikara, as a criterion for deeper instruction even in atma vichara. The pride of place given by Bhagavan [cf., his own description in 'slow motion' of his 'death-experience' at Madurai; refer verses 4&5 of Arunachala Pancharatna, and verse 28 of Forty Verses] to pranayama and, prapatti or ekagrata, as two absolutely essential adjuncts to atma vichara, are the vital aspects that are hinted at by him in the cryptic note above. We are the sad losers if we make out of Bhagavan's atma vichara a 'puritanical-something' devoid of pranayama or bhakti, which it is not.

What more can be said? One must infer and understand!

4. Finally one considers the languages in which the Silence called Bhagavan Ramana 'translated' itself. The choice of Sanskrit, mother of the largest family of world languages, and then the three southern languages of Bharat [Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam]; quite representative of a hoary tradition of a triumvirate of warring kings of the ancient druvida (meaning, not any race, but simply South India) for the written works, and the addition of an epigrammatic English in his verbal communication with the Western devotees, has surely a role to play in the destiny of mankind and the world wide Web. The Dakshinamurti avatar is ever space-like, that is, untouched by 'its mission on earth'. Vast and harmonizing world-currents are set in motion while they are yet 'small seeds', and all very silently and automatically by his very 'earthly' Presence, and it is immaterial whether these epochs are eventually, that is upon fruition, attributed to him or not! The four Indian languages that vied for the divine attention of Bhagavan, and succeeded in having the One Brahman beyond words, expressed in poem through Ramana, are thus destined to usher the reintegration, through language, of not only all of Bharat under the one eternal culture it has always been, but all of humanity into the fold of sanatana dharma.

It would be no exaggeration to say that in the new millennium while English would dominate as the language for commerce and leisure, Sanskrit would become not only the preferred basis for building 'consciousness' (intelligence) 'into' machines, but it would also be recognised as the only truly well-fashioned (sams-krita) language least-prone to undetectable mutations and errors, in the transmission of intelligence over vast scales of Time and Space. As a harbinger of the shape of things to come, one might mention that current expert view holds that maximum fidelity can be preserved while using computers to translate from any language to any other language, only if Sanskrit is adopted as
the central hub of a wheel where other languages form the circular periphery. The spokes are the language-translators leading ‘into’ and ‘out of’ Sanskrit. Thus Sanskrit will serve as the ‘home base’ which every language must ‘touch’ before talking to any other language.

Tamil stands today in serious danger of being reduced to a meterless invertebrate, making measureless ambiguous sounds, thanks to blinkered mediocrity. A small example would suffice! Arunagirinathar’s mut tai-ti taru, but ti-ti tiru nagai is now written and pronounced (dead?) as mut tai taru, but ti tiirunagai. The dropping of the vital ‘stops’ (ot-trezhut-tu) as above, leads to big bloomers too. The poor man asking for a hut ought to say, “tangak-kudisai kodu” meaning, “give me a hut to live in”. However without the stops (ot-trezhut-tu), it becomes’ “tanga kudisai kodu” meaning, “give me a golden hut”. Bhagavan has employed in all of his original poems, a vocabulary of not more than say, a hundred chaste Tamil words, and at the same time steered clear of all philosophic ‘imported’ terminology of Vedanta and Siddhanta. This economy and chastity in vocabulary, found in his Five Hymns To Arunachala, Ulladu Narpadu, and Upadesa Undiyar, coupled with the liberal use of archaic forms, is sure to attract many—even those not born into Tamil—into learning to swim in pellucid Tamil waters in the millennia ahead. The hypnotic mantra-like spell which the Aksharamana Malai exerts on all, regardless of age from womb to tomb is proof of the ‘seed’ sown by Bhagavan for Tamil’s rejuvenation as a world language. The simple but chaste Tamil of Bhagavan, the spell of assonant sounds and syncopation, the ever deepening inner meaning of divine romance and redemption, are all graded steps to drinking deep the amrita of Self expressed as Tamil.

One cannot but wonder at the thrust that Tamil has received unadvertised, through Bhagavan towards a universal appreciation of the ambrosial Tamil (Tamizh-zhamizhdamizhdu) with its inherent capacity to reflect the Tamil aram, the valour, the tolerance, the poetic genius, and the humour and hospitality of Tamil culture.

Now, that is a record that can be improved upon only by the vibrant Silence of Self, of which Bhagavan, born into Tamil, was the embodiment!
Selfishness

I.S. Madugula

In gratitude, they say,
the pupil must offer
something to the master.

Inside of me
I looked long and hard
and high and low
to find something my own
that is worthy of the master,
Bhagavan, to no avail.

From foot to face
and tip to toe
the body is guilty
of vile misdeeds, unfit
to touch his feet
The mind's even less fit,
tainted by arrogance and ego
and corrupted by lives-long desire.
I am ashamed even to speak of the senses.

But let me think:
if the body and the mind and the senses
are all I can call my own,

then I have no choice
but to offer them in all humility.
When I give away all my sheaths, though,

I will uncover my Self.
I know Bhagavan wouldn't
have it any other way.
Arunachala

By Arthur Osborne

There is a ruggedness about the scene. Boulders lie as though scattered by a giant hand. Dry thorn and cactus fences, sun-parched fields, small hills eroded into gaunt shapes; and yet huge shady trees along the dusty road, and here and there, near tank or well, the vivid green of paddy fields. And rising up out of this rough beauty the hill of Arunachala. Though only 2,682 feet high it dominates the countryside. From the south, the side of the Ashram, it is deceptively simple — just a symmetrical hill with two almost equal foothills, one on either side. To make the symmetry more perfect, it wears most mornings a crown of white cloud or haze about the summit. But it is astonishing how the aspect changes as one treads the eight-mile road around it, going the prescribed way, from south to west, with one’s right side to the hill; and each aspect has its character and symbolism — that where it flings back an echo, that where the peak barely shows between two foothills, like the Self in the interval between two thoughts, that of the five peaks, that of Siva and Sakti, and others.

Sacred tanks mark the eight directions of space and mantapams (simple stone halls) stand at various significant points. Pre-eminent among these is the Dakshinamurthi Mantapam at the southern point, for Dakshinamurthi is Siva teaching in silence, and that is Arunachala.

Who is the seer? When I sought within I watched the disappearance of the seer and what survived it. No thought of ‘I saw’ arose, so how could the thought ‘I did not see’ arise? Who has the power to convey this in words when even Thou couldst do so in ancient days by silence only (appearing as Dakshinamurthi)? Only to convey by silence Thy State Thou standest as a Hill shining from heaven to earth.1

Sri Bhagavan always encouraged pradakshina (circuit) of the hill. Even in the case of the old or infirm he would not discourage it

---

1 Eight Stanzas on Sri Arunachala by Sri Bhagavan, Verse 2.
but only tell them to go slowly. Indeed, the *pradakshina* is supposed to be made slowly, “like a pregnant queen in her ninth month”. Whether in silent meditation or with singing or blowing of conch, it is to be made on foot, not in any conveyance, and in fact bare-foot. The most auspicious times are Sivarathri, the Night of Siva, and Kartikai, the day when the constellation of Kartikai (Pleiades) is in conjunction with the full moon, falling usually in November. On these occasions the continuous stream of devotees has been compared to a garland around the hill.

An elderly cripple was once hobbling on crutches along the road that skirts the hill. He had often done so in *pradakshina* but this time it was to leave Tiruvannamalai. He felt himself an encumbrance to his family; quarrels had broken out and he had decided to leave them and somehow make a living in a village. Suddenly a young *brahmin* appeared before him and snatched away his crutches saying, “You don’t deserve them.” Before the anger that flushed him could find words he realized that his limbs were straight and he needed no crutches. He did not leave Tiruvannamalai; he stayed and was well known there. Sri Bhagavan told the story in all detail to some devotees and remarked on its similarity to that told in the *Arunachala Sthala Purana*. He was a young Swami on the hill at the time but he never said that it was he who appeared as the *brahmin* youth.

Arunachala is one of the oldest and most sacred of all India’s holy places. Sri Shankara spoke of it as Mount Meru. The *Skanda Purana* declares, “That is the holy place. Of all, Arunachala is the most sacred. It is the heart of the world. Know it to be the secret and sacred heart-centre of Siva.” Many saints have lived there, merging their sanctity with that of the hill. It is said, and confirmed by Sri Bhagavan, that to this day *siddhas* (sages with supernatural powers) dwell in its caves, whether with physical bodies or not, and some are said to have seen them as lights moving about the hill at night.

There is a *puranic* story about the origin of the hill. Once Vishnu and Brahma fell to disputing which of them was the greater. Their quarreling brought chaos on earth, so the *devas* approached Siva and besought him to settle the dispute. Siva thereupon manifested himself as a column of light from which a voice issued declaring that whoever could find its upper or lower end was the greater. Vishnu took the form of a boar and burrowed down into the earth to find the base, while Brahma took the form of a swan and soared upwards to seek its summit. Vishnu failed to reach the base of the column but “beginning to see within himself the Supreme Light which dwells in the hearts of all, he became lost in meditation, oblivious to the physical body and even unaware of himself, the one who sought”. Brahma saw the flower of an alse plant falling through the air and, thinking to win by deception, returned with it and declared he had plucked it from the summit.

Vishnu admitted his failure and turned to the Lord in praise and prayer, “You are
Self-knowledge. You are OM. You are the beginning and the middle and the end of everything. You are everything and illuminate everything," He was pronounced great while Brahma was abashed and confessed his fault.

In this legend Vishnu represents the mind and Brahma the intellect, while Siva is Atma, the spirit.

The story continues that, because the lingam or column of light was too dazzling to behold, Siva manifested himself instead as the hill Arunachala, declaring, "As the moon derives its light from the sun, so other holy places shall derive their sanctity from Arunachala. This is the only place where I have taken this form for the benefit of those who wish to worship me and obtain illumination. Arunachala is OM itself. I will appear on the summit of this hill every year at Kartikai in the form of a peace-giving beacon." This refers not only to the sanctity of Arunachala itself but also to the pre-eminence of the doctrine of advaita and the path of Self-enquiry of which Arunachala is the centre. One can understand this meaning in Sri Bhagavan's saying, "In the end everyone must come to Arunachala."

It was more than two years after his arrival at Tiruvannamalai before Sri Bhagavan began to live on the hill. Up till then he had stayed constantly at some shrine or temple. Only towards the close of 1898 did he take up his abode in the small temple at Pavazhakkunru, hallowed centuries ago by the presence of the great Saint Gautama Rishi, where his mother found him. He never left Arunachala again. Early next year he moved into a cave on the hill itself and thereafter he stayed in one cave or another until 1922 when he moved down to the foot of the hill. There the present Ashram grew up and there he spent his remaining years on earth.

While on the hill, he lived nearly all the time on the south-eastern slope. The Ashram stands at the south, just beside the Dakshinamurthi mantapam (stone hall). 'The Southward-Facing' is one of the 108 Names of Bhagavan that are now chanted daily at his samadhi. It is a name symbolical of spiritual authority in general, as the Sadguru is the Pole round which the world revolves, but it is in particular a name of Dakshinamurthi. Dakshinamurthi is Siva teaching in silence. In the verse quoted at the beginning of this chapter Sri Bhagavan identifies Arunachala with Dakshinamurthi; in the following verse he speaks of Ramana and Arunachala as one:

In the recesses of the lotus-shaped heart of all, from Vishnu downwards, there shines as Absolute Consciousness the Paramatman (Supreme Spirit) who is the same as Arunachala or Ramana. When the mind melts with love of him and reaches the inmost recess of the heart wherein he abides as the Beloved the subtle eye of Absolute Consciousness opens and he reveals himself as pure Knowledge.

The cave to which Sri Bhagavan went first and in which he stayed longest is on the south-east slope. It is called Virupaksha after a saint who dwelt and was buried there, probably in the thirteenth century. It is curiously shaped to resemble the sacred monosyllable OM, the tomb being in the inner recess, and
it is said that the very sound OM can be heard within.

The trustees of the Virupaksha math (shrine) in town had also property rights over the cave and used to levy a small fee on pilgrims who visited it at the annual festival of Kartikai. At the time when Sri Bhagavan went there this practice had fallen into abeyance because two parties were disputing the ownership and a lawsuit was pending between them. When the case was decided the successful party resumed the levy, but by that time the stream of visitors had grown much larger and was continuous throughout the year, not merely at Kartikai; and since it was the presence of Sri Bhagavan that drew them there the fee had become, in effect, a tax on access to him. In order not to sanction this, he moved out of the cave to a level patch of ground in front of it and sat under the shade of a tree there. The agent thereupon shifted his place of collection to the outer perimeter to include access to the tree also. So Sri Bhagavan left and went to the Sadguruswami Cave lower down and then, after a short stay there, to another cave. The stream of visitors to Virupaksha Cave ceased, and the proprietors, finding that they had only inconvenienced the Swami without benefitting themselves, asked him to return and undertook not to levy the fee so long as he occupied the cave. On this condition he returned.

In the summer months Virupaksha Cave becomes oppressively hot. There is a cave near Mulaipal Tirtha tank at the foot of the hill that is cooler and has a supply of pure water for drinking. A mango tree stands over it, giving shade, from which it has acquired the name of Mango Cave. Two brothers, devotees of Sri Bhagavan, blasted away the overhanging rock and put up a front wall with a door and he occupied it during the hot months.

In the year 1900, shortly after Sri Bhagavan went to live on the hill, a devotee named Nalla Pillai from Kumbakonam came to Tiruvannamalai and took a photograph of him, the earliest portrait we have. It is the face of a beautiful youth, almost a child, yet with the strength and profundity of the Bhagavan.

During the early years on the hill Sri Bhagavan still maintained silence. His radiance had already drawn a group of devotees around him and an Ashram had come into being. It was not only seekers after Truth that were drawn to him but simple people, children, even animals. Young children from the town would climb the hill to Virupaksha Cave, sit near him, play around him, and go back feeling happy. Squirrels and monkeys would come up to him and eat out of his hand.

He occasionally wrote out explanations or instructions for his disciples, but his not speaking did not really impede their training because, both now and later when he had resumed speech, his real teaching was through silence, in the tradition of Dakshinamurthi, the tradition exemplified also in China by Lao Tsu and the early Taoist Sages. "That Tao which can be named is
not the Tao" — the knowledge which can be formulated is not the true Knowledge. This silent teaching was a direct spiritual influence which the mind absorbed and later interpreted according to its ability. The first European visitor has thus described it:

On reaching the cave we sat before him at his feet and said nothing. We sat thus for a long time and I felt lifted out of myself. For half an hour I looked into the Maharshi’s eyes, which never changed their expression of deep contemplation. I began to realize somewhat that the body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost; I could feel only that his body was not the man: it was the instrument of God, merely a sitting, motionless corpse from which God was radiating terrifically. My own feelings were indescribable.\(^2\)

Another, Paul Brunton, who arrived more a sceptic than a believer, has given the following account of the first impact the silence of Sri Bhagavan made upon his mind.

“It is an ancient theory of mine that one can take the inventory of a man’s soul from his eyes. But before those of the Maharshi I hesitate, puzzled and baffled. . . .

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

It was not only to the restless mind of the intellectual that the Grace of Bhagavan brought peace but to the grief-stricken heart also. Echammal, as she was called at the Ashram (her previous name had been Lakshmiammal), had been a happy wife and mother in the village of Mandakolathur, but before the age of twenty-five she lost first her husband, then her only son, then her only daughter. Stunned by her bereavement, tortured by memory, she could find no rest. She could no longer endure the place where she had been happy, the people among whom she had been happy. Thinking it might help her to forget, she travelled to Gokarnam in Bombay State to serve the holy men there, but she returned as grief-stricken as she went. Some friends told her of a young Swami at Tiruvanamalai who brought peace to those who sought. At once she set out. She had relatives in the town but did not go to them.

\(^2\) From a letter written to a friend in London by F.H. Humphreys and published by her in the International Psychic Gazette, London.
as the very sight of them would bring back her bitter memories. With a friend she climbed the hill to see the Swami. She stood in silence before him, not telling her grief. There was no need. The compassion shining in his eyes was healing. A whole hour she stood, no word spoken, and then she turned and went down the hillside to the town, her steps light, the burden of her sorrow lifted.

Daily she visited the Swami thereafter. He was the sun that had dispersed her clouds. She could even recall her loved ones now without bitterness. She spent the rest of her life in Tiruvannamalai. She was able to take a small house there — her father left her a little money and her brothers helped her out — and many visiting devotees enjoyed her hospitality. She prepared food for Sri Bhagavan daily — which meant for the whole Ashram, because he would accept nothing that was not shared equally among all. Until age and failing health kept her away, she used to carry it up the hillside herself and would never eat until she had served them. As they grew in numbers her contribution came to be only a small addition to the general meal, but if ever she was delayed Sri Bhagavan would wait till she came so as not to disappoint her.

With all the grief she had passed through and the peace she had found, she was still mother enough to form a new attachment, and she adopted a daughter, not without asking Sri Bhagavan's permission. When the time came she arranged her marriage and rejoiced at the birth of a grandson whom she named Ramana. And then one day, utterly unprepared, she received a telegram that her adopted daughter had died. The old grief broke upon her again. She rushed up the hill to Sri Bhagavan with the telegram. He read it with tears in his eyes and, appeased but still sorrowful, she left for the funeral. She returned with the child Ramana and placed him in the arms of Sri Ramana. Once more there were tears in his eyes as he held the child and his compassion brought her peace.

Echammal used to practice yogic concentration into which she had been initiated by a North Indian Guru. She would fix her gaze on the tip of her nose and sit in ecstatic contemplation of the light that appeared before her, sometimes for hours together, motionless, oblivious of the body. Sri Bhagavan was told of this but did not reply. Finally she herself told him and he discouraged the practice, saying, "Those lights you see outside yourself are not your real goal. You should aim at realizing the Self and nothing short of it." Thereupon she discontinued her former methods and placed her reliance in Sri Bhagavan alone.

Once a Sastri from North India was talking with Sri Bhagavan at Virupaksha Cave, when Echammal arrived with food, looking agitated and shivering. When asked what was the matter she said that as she was passing Sadguruswami Cave she thought she saw Sri Bhagavan and a stranger standing beside the path. She continued on her way but heard a voice, "Why go farther up when I am here?" She turned again to look and there was no one there. She hastened on to the Ashram in fear.
What, Swami!" the Sastri exclaimed. "While you are talking to me here you manifest yourself to this lady on the way here and do not show any such sign of Grace to me." And Sri Bhagavan explained that Echammal's visions were due to her constant concentration on him.

She was by no means alone in having visions of Sri Bhagavan, though I know of no other case when the vision caused fear. Years later a Western visitor, an elderly gentleman, had come to the Ashram at the foot of the hill. After lunch he set out to explore the hill, but in doing so he lost his way. Tired with the heat and exertion, not knowing which way to go, he was in desperate plight, when Sri Bhagavan came past and showed him the way back to the Ashram. People were already anxious when he got back and asked him what had happened. "I just went out for a stroll on the hill," he told them, "and got lost. The heat and exertion were a little too much for me and I was in a bad way. I don't know what I should have done but for the fact that Bhagavan happened to come that way and directed me to the Ashram." And they were astonished because Bhagavan had never left the hall.

Rudra Raj Pande, Principal of the Tri Chandra College at Katmandu, Nepal, went with a friend to worship at the great temple in town before leaving Tiruvannamalai. He says:

The inner temple gates were thrown open and my guide took us into the interior, which was rather dark. A small oiled wick flame was flickering a few yards in front of us. The young voice of my companion shouted 'Arunachala'. All my attention was directed to the one purpose of seeing the image or Lingam (which symbolizes the Supreme Lord, eternal and unmanifest) in the sanctum sanctorum. But, strange to say, instead of the Lingam I see the image of Maharshi Bhagavan Sri Ramana, his smiling countenance, his brilliant eyes looking at me. And what is more strange, it is not one Maharshi that I see, nor two, nor three — in hundreds I see the same smiling countenance, those lustrous eyes I see them wherever I may look in that sanctum sanctorum. My eyes catch not the full figure of the Maharshi but only the smiling face, from the chin above. I am in raptures and beside myself with inexpressible joy — that bliss and calmness of mind I then felt how can words describe? Tears of joy flowed down my cheeks. I went to the temple to see Lord Arunachala and I found the living Lord as he graciously revealed himself. I can never forget the deep intimate experience I had in the ancient temple.

Nevertheless, Sri Bhagavan never encouraged interest in visions or desire for them, nor did they occur to all devotees or disciples.

One of the most devoted adherents of Sri Bhagavan at this time was Seshadriswami, the same Seshadri who had kept schoolboys away when he first came to Tiruvannamalai. He now lived on the hill, lower down than

---

*Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 2nd edition, p.166
Virupaksha Cave, and paid frequent visits there. He had attained a high spiritual state and had grace and beauty, which shows in the surviving portraits. There was something bird-like and aloof about him. He was not often accessible; he would not always speak, and when he did his speech was often enigmatic. He had left home at the age of seventeen and had received initiation into mantras (sacred formulæ) and japa (invocations) that develop occult powers, sometimes sitting up the whole night in a cemetery invoking the Sakti (creative energy).

Not only would he always encourage devotees to go to Ramanaswami, as he called him, but he would on occasion identify himself with him. He could read thoughts and if Sri Bhagavan had told a devotee anything he would say, “I told you so and so, why do you ask again?” or “Why don’t you do it?” It was only rarely that he would give initiation into some mantra and if the supplicant was already a devotee of Ramanaswami he would always refuse, bidding him remain there where was the supreme upadesa, the silent guidance.

On one rare occasion he actually exhorted a devotee to undertake active sadhana, the quest for enlightenment. It was a certain Subramania Mudali who, together with his wife and mother, used to spend most of his income preparing food for sadhus who had renounced the world. Like Echammal, they took food daily to Sri Bhagavan and his Ashram, and to Seshadriswami too when they could find him, and yet at the same time Subramania was a landowner and was involved in litigation and trying to increase his property. Seshadriswami, grieving that one so devoted should be so attached, advised him to give up such cares and devote himself entirely to the service of God and to striving for spiritual development. “You see,” he said, “my younger brother has an income of Rs.10,000 and I have an income of Rs.1,000; why shouldn’t you try to get an income of at least a hundred?” The ‘younger brother’ was Ramanaswami and the ‘income’ spiritual attainment. When Subramania still held back, Seshadriswami became insistent and warned him that he was committing the mortal sin of slaying a brahmin. Having more faith in Sri Bhagavan, Subramania asked him whether this was true, and Sri Bhagavan interpreted, “Yes, you can be said to commit the murder of Brahman by not realizing that you are Brahman.”

Seshadriswami once sat in the Mango Cave gazing fixedly at Sri Bhagavan in order to read his thoughts; however the mind of Sri Bhagavan, merged in the tranquillity of the Spirit, showed no ripple of thought, so he was baffled and said, “It is not clear what this person is thinking.”

Sri Bhagavan remained silent. After a pause Seshadriswami added, “If one worships the Lord Arunachala he will grant salvation.”

And then Bhagavan asked, “Who is it that worships and who is the worshipped?”

Seshadriswami broke into a laugh, “That is just what is not clear.”

Then Sri Bhagavan expounded at length the doctrine of the One Self manifested in all
the forms of the universe and yet unmanifested and utterly unchanged by manifestation, the one Reality and the Self of him who worships. Seshadriswami listened patiently and at the end he rose and said, "I can't say. All this is dark to me. At any rate I worship."

So saying he turned to the crest of the hill and prostrated himself to it again and again and then departed.

And yet Seshadriswami also would sometimes speak from the standpoint of Unity, seeing all things as manifestations of the Spirit; but from whatever point of view he spoke it was liable to be with a dry, disconcerting humour. One day a certain Narayanaswami found him standing staring at a buffalo and asked, "What is Swami looking at?"

"I am looking at this."

"Is it the buffalo Swami is looking at?" he persisted.

And then, pointing at the buffalo, Seshadriswami bade him, "Tell me what this is."

"It is a buffalo," he answered innocently, whereupon Seshadriswami burst out: "Is it a buffalo? A buffalo! You buffalo! Call it Brahman!" So saying he turned and went away.

Seshadriswami died in January 1929. As is the accepted practice in the case of a saint, his body was not cremated but buried. Sri Bhagavan stood by, silently watching. He is still revered at Tiruvannamalai and on the anniversary of his death his portrait is taken in procession through the town.

During the early years that Sri Bhagavan spent on the hill the process of return to outer activity was gradually proceeding. He began to walk about and explore the hill, to read books and write interpretations. A certain Padmanabha Swami, known also as Jatai Swami on account of his matted hair, had an ashram on the hill and kept there a number of Sanskrit books on spiritual knowledge and on applied sciences with a spiritual basis, such as ayurveda (traditional Hindu medicine). Sri Bhagavan would visit him and glance through them, immediately mastering their content and so fixing it in his memory that he could not merely repeat it but give chapter and verse. Padmanabha Swami would often appeal to him as an authority when any point of doctrine was raised.

It is said in the puranas that on the northern slope of Arunachala, near the summit, a siddha purusha (sage with supernatural powers) known as Arunagiri Yogi sits beneath a banyan tree, in an almost inaccessible spot, teaching in silence. There is a shrine or mantapam dedicated to him in the Great Temple of Tiruvannamalai. The story indicates that the Grace of Arunachala, guiding men through mouna diksha (silent initiation) on the path of Self-enquiry to Liberation, though ever potent, had become inaccessible to the people of this spiritually dark age. Nevertheless, the symbolical meaning of the story does not make it any the less true literally. It happened one day, about 1906, that Sri Bhagavan was wandering on the northern slope of the hill when, in a dry water course, he saw an enormous banyan leaf, large
enough to serve a meal on. Presuming that it must have been carried down by the water and wishing to see the tree which bore such leaves, he set out on a later occasion to climb the water-course up the hillside. After climbing steep and rugged parts of the hill, he reached a place whence he could see a large flat rock and on it the banyan tree he was seeking, enormous and a deep green. He was amazed to see such a tree growing on what looked like bare rock. He continued to climb but, as he was drawing nearer, disturbed a hornets' nest with his leg. The hornets flew out and attacked the offending leg in a fury of revenge. Sri Bhagavan stood still until they had finished, meekly accepting their just punishment for having destroyed their home; but he took this as a sign not to proceed and so returned to the cave. The devotees were getting anxious as he had been out so long. When they saw him they were appalled at the state of his leg, swollen and inflamed. He has since pointed out the position of the almost inaccessible banyan tree but he never again set out to reach it and he discouraged any of his devotees who wished to do so.

A group of devotees, among them an Englishman, Thomson by name, did once set out, determined to find it. After climbing rather recklessly for some time they found themselves in so precarious a position that they dared proceed neither up nor down. They prayed to Bhagavan for help and somehow got back to the Ashram safely. They never tried it again. Others also have made the attempt but without success.

Even though Sri Bhagavan might disapprove of an action it was very seldom that he would explicitly forbid it. Understanding as to what was appropriate or inappropriate had to come from within. In the present case, it was clearly not appropriate for his devotees to attempt what their Master had refrained from.

There was a time when Sri Bhagavan used to roam the hill frequently as well as climbing to the summit and making pradakshina (circuit), so that he knew every part of it. And then one day, when he was wandering alone, he passed an old woman gathering fuel on the hillside. She looked like a common outcaste woman, but she addressed the young Swami fearlessly, as an equal. Beginning with the rough cursing common to such people, she said: “May you be put on the funeral pyre! Why do you wander about in the sun like that? Why don’t you sit quiet?”

“It can have been no ordinary woman,” Sri Bhagavan said when he told the devotees about it; “who knows who she was?” Certainly, no ordinary outcaste woman would have dared to speak to a Swami like that. The devotees took it to be a manifestation of Arunagiri Siddha, the Spirit of Arunachala. From that time Sri Bhagavan gave up roaming the hillside.

When Sri Bhagavan first went to Tiruvannamalai he sometimes moved about in a state of trance, as already described. This did not completely end until about 1912 when there was a final and complete experience of death. He set out from Virupaksha Cave one morning for Pachaimman Koil, accompanied by
Palaniswamy, Vasudeva Sastri and others. He had an oil bath there and was nearing Tortoise Rock on the way back when a sudden physical weakness overcame him. He described it fully afterwards:

The landscape in front of me disappeared as a bright white curtain was drawn across my vision and shut it out. I could distinctly see the gradual process. There was a stage when I could still see a part of the landscape clearly while the rest was covered by the advancing curtain. It was just like drawing a slide across one’s view in a stereoscope. On experiencing this I stopped walking lest I should fall. When it cleared I walked on. When darkness and faintness came over me a second time I leaned against a rock until it cleared. The third time it happened I felt it safer to sit, so I sat down near the rock. Then the bright white curtain completely shut off my vision, my head was swimming and my circulation and breathing stopped. The skin turned a livid blue. It was the regular death hue and it got darker and darker. Vasudeva Sastri, in fact, took me to be dead and held me in his arms and began to weep aloud and lament my death.

I could distinctly feel his clasp and his shivering and hear his words of lamentation and understand their meaning. I also saw the discoloration of my skin and felt the stoppage of my circulation and breathing and the increased chilliness of the extremities of my body. My usual current of awareness still continued in that state also. I was not in the least afraid and felt no sadness at the condition of the body. I had sat down near the rock in my usual posture and closed my eyes and was not leaning against the rock. The body, left without circulation or respiration, still maintained that position. This state continued for some ten or fifteen minutes. Then a shock passed suddenly through the body and circulation revived with enormous force, and breathing also, and the body perspired from every pore. The colour of life reappeared on the skin. I then opened my eyes and got up and said, 'Let’s go'. We reached Virupaksha Cave without further trouble. This was the only fit I had in which both circulation and respiration stopped.

Later, to correct wrong accounts that began to be spread, he added:

I did not bring on the fit purposely, nor did I wish to see what this body would look like after death, nor did I say that I will not leave this body without warning others. It was one of those fits that I used to get occasionally, only this time it took a very serious form.

What is, perhaps, most striking about this experience is that it was a repetition, heightened by actual physical demonstration, of that certainty of endurance through death which had constituted Sri Bhagavan’s spiritual awakening. It recalls the verse from Thayumanavar, the Tamil classic which Sri Bhagavan often quoted, “When overpowered by the wide expanse which is without beginning, end or middle, there is the realization of non-dual bliss.”
It may be that this marked the final completion of Sri Bhagavan’s return to full outer normality. It is hard to give any impression of how normal and how human he was in his mode of life, and yet it is necessary, for the description of his previous austerity may leave the idea of someone grim and forbidding. On the contrary, his manner was natural and free from all constraint and the newcomer immediately felt at his ease with him. His conversation was full of humour and his laughter so infectious, so like that of a child, that even those who did not understand the language would join in. Everything about him and about the Ashram was clean and tidy. When a regular Ashram had been established, life in it followed a time-table as exact as work in an office. The clocks were kept right to the minute, the calendars were up-to-date, and nothing was wasted. I have seen an attendant reproved for bringing out a new sheet of paper to bind a book when one already cut into could be made do. And with food too: not a grain of rice remained on his leaf-plate when he finished eating. Vegetable peelings were saved for the cattle, not thrown away.

There was a spontaneous simplicity and humility about him. One of the few things that aroused a show of anger in him was if those who were serving food gave more of any delicacy to him than to others. He did not like people to rise when he entered the hall but would make a little gesture to them to remain seated. He was walking slowly down the hillside to the Ashram one afternoon, tall, golden-hued, white-haired already, and frail, stooping a little and leaning heavily on a staff on account of rheumatism, with him a short, dark attendant. A devotee was coming behind so he drew to the side of the path, saying, “You are younger and walk quicker; you go first.” A little courteous action, but so much from Master to disciple.

One could go on endlessly. Some of these points will come up more fittingly later, but now that there is mention of full return to a normal mode of life, it has to be indicated how normal, how intensely human and how gracious that mode of life was.

YOU MUST CLING TOO
By A. Devaraja Mudaliar

In India we compare the aspirant who strives, to the child of the monkey that clings to its mother as she jumps from tree to tree. We compare the devotee who relies completely on the grace of the Guru, to that of the cat that is quite helpless and is therefore picked up by its mother and carried in her mouth. Alluding to this, I said once that I was like the kitten and had cast the whole responsibility on Bhagavan. He laughed but would not agree. He said, “Both are necessary; I will hold you, but you must cling too.”
From the Ashram Archives

Taken on 15-8-1947, Indian Independence Day


From the Ashram Archives

Taken (Circa) 1938


This is a computer enhanced scan of half-tone reproduction from the Malayalam biography of Sri Bhagavan. (a translation of Self Realization of B.V. Narasimha Swami by Ekkanathu Theyunni known as Appunni.) (The original photograph is not available.)
Gautama said, "Goddess! Hear what happened long ago. At Sankara's command I visited places sacred to Him, such as Kedar, Badarikasrama, Kasi, Sri Parvata, Kanchipuram, Tiruchuzhi etc. I worshipped the lingas installed by sages and great yogis and bathed in the tirthas. I practised austerity along with my disciples and performed yajnas (sacrifices). Finally I had darshan of Arunadri, the Linga in the form of the famous Arunachala Hill. Here, I saw tapasvis who were engrossed in penance and worshipping Sonagiri, subsisting upon roots. Seeing their devotion I too fell in love with this great Linga and with great fervour began to adore Arunachala which had first been worshipped by Brahma.

"I prayed, 'Lord of Arunachala that art acclaimed by the Vedas in the words Asau yastamra aruna uta babhrus sumangalah. Siva! The Supreme Self! Thou that art the embodiment of Vedas! Eternal One! Slayer of the God of time (Kalakala)! Beloved of thy devotees! Destroyer of the three cities! Lord of the devas! By merely looking at thee one obtains the merit that accrues by following all the dharmanas. One need not practise austerity thereafter. Even the devas wish to dwell in this abode of thine. Time being now propitious for me, I have the good fortune of dwelling here. The austerities practised by me have enabled me to see thee. Thy form is awe-inspiring. Nowhere else in the world can one see a linga in the form of a hill. This form constitutes the three gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. It controls the three phases of time as well as the three kinds of powers (saktis). This wonderful Linga is the essence of the three Vedas. Thou abidest on earth in this form as the famous Sonadri (Red Hill) for protecting the three worlds. In front of me I see that form, most auspicious, most compassionate and the refuge of all jivas. Pray, save me.'"
Sonachala, whom I praised in this manner, revealed thereupon His divine form to me, called me to His side and, after listening to the praises sung with such great devotion, said, 'I am greatly pleased with you. You shall worship me according to ancient custom and perform austerities and thus proclaim my glory to all. When you were practising austerities on the Kailasa Mountain I ordered you to come to the southern country and worship Arunachala. The saptarishis worship me on earth in the same way and do good to all living beings through the power of their austerities. Worship me in accordance with the method laid down in the agamas. This glorious and divine method of worshipping me is worthy of being seen even by the devas of swarga. Make it clear to all that Arunachala in this physical form, composed of earth, is truly Siva. There are ever so many virtuous souls who, having formerly worshipped me, are now living on earth in great joy. As you are superior to all of them you must clearly expound the proper method of worshipping Siva.'

'On being commanded thus by the Lord, I bowed down to Him and reverently asked Him, 'How can I worship the Lord who is fiery and unapproachable? How am I to carry out thy command? Kindly tell me how I am to understand thy words'. The Lord of Arunachala then replied as follows, 'I shall describe to you the lingas on earth which are in their subtle form. You may worship me in accordance with the agamas and with the power of your austerities.'

'Saying this, Swayambhu revealed Himself to me as Siva. On seeing this Linga adorned with all kinds of ornaments, I felt that the goal of my life had been attained. I again begged Siva who is fond of His devotees, thus, 'How can name and form be attributed to thee who cannot be described even by the agamas? Who can worship thee with flowers? Where is the temple for thee? Or how is one to be built? Which is the hymn to praise thee? In what manner art thou to be worshipped? Who is thy bodyguard? How is one to make people believe that ever so many celestial beings (devatas) always abide in thy presence? Supreme Lord! Thou must kindly explain all this to me.'

'When I prayed thus, the Lord ordered Visvakarma as follows, 'You must create here a divine and noble city named Arunachala. You must also build in it a divine temple adorned with jewels. Arrangements should be made in the temple for chanting the Vedas, and for singing, dancing and playing musical instruments as part of my worship.'

'The peerless Sambhu then explained to me the proper order of chanting His different names while offering flowers and the rules prescribed for it. He said, 'Gautama! I shall describe how mortals should worship me. Listen. Know also who are the persons to be appointed for my worship. You must worship Arunachala which appears as a lustrous and immeasurable Linga on earth, for the welfare of the entire world. Let my power (sakti) which is inseparable from me and sustains the glory of this temple be installed on my northern side.
and worshipped as Apitakuchambika. The Lord of Arunachala is fond of Her and never parts from Her. Let offerings be duly made to Him. Let Sundareswari be worshipped during auspicious festivals. Since Bala Ganapati is the bestower of all prosperity, let Him be well adorned and worshipped in front of Me. Nataraja who is fond of dancing, Amritesvara and Parasakti should also be worshipped. Let the goddesses who remove obstacles be installed on the southern side, and Skanda who carries the weapon known as Sakti, on the north-east.'

"I should be worshipped in the innermost shrine (mulasthana), Dakshinamurti in the south, Maha Vishnu in the form of Agni in the West, Brahma in the East and in a separate shrine on the northern side. Goddess Unnamulai should be well adored, accompanied by all the devas and surrounded by the dikpalakas. The extremely glorious devis, the fully adorned Kshetrapalaka (the protector of the temple), devatas who maintain the traditions, should all be worshipped for ensuring the prosperity of the temple. Monthly festivals should be grandly celebrated. Let dikshitars who are learned in the Vedas, virtuous, prosperous, pure in heart and well-versed in the agamas of Siva, be appointed for rendering divine service. Let highly accomplished persons be engaged to play on musical instruments at the time of worship. Let pandits learned in Sadvidya and Chaturvidya and kshatriyas, vaisyas and others who are devotees of Siva be encouraged to settle here. Let mutts be constructed on all four sides for the accommodation of pilgrims and the residence of ascetics, sages and devotees of Siva. Let pasupatas (A sect among Saivites), kapalikas (another sect who use kapala, human skull, in their rituals) and Sivayogis live in these mutts, beg their food and worship Siva. The kings should protect this place without violating my commands.'

"There is a makizha (bakula) tree at this place. All temple affairs should be decided under it. Money offered to the temple will yield boundless merit. I listen to the prayers of devotees at that spot and grant the boons desired by them. I pardon all the faults of those who adore me.'

"I accept the worship conducted by mortals as laid down in the agamas. Pious acts performed by my devotees please Me. O Sage! You must examine the agamas and prescribe the methods of worshipping Me. Let special pujas be conducted on full moon days. Let thousands of satras (inns) supply free food on that day. Let everyone make gifts according to his ability. There is no doubt that those who keep a light burning continuously before me, will become Effulgent Beings like me.'

"Having heard these words of Sambhu my doubts were cleared. I bowed to the Lord of Arunagiri and prayed to Him."

Gautama said to Siva, 'I wish to learn from thee thy names which are to be used during worship in this temple.'
Thereupon the Lord said, 'O Sage! Listen to my names which fulfill all desires:

1. Sonadrisa Lord of the Red Hill
2. Arimadrosa Lord of the Crimson Hill
3. Devabhisa Lord of devas
4. Janapriya Beloved of people
5. Prapannarakhaksha Protector of those who seek refuge with Him
6. Dhira Brave One
7. Siva The auspicious One
8. Sevakavartaka He who is devoted to His votaries
9. Amrtesana Lord of the nectar
10. Striubhava-pradayaka Granter of birth as man or woman
11. Bhaktavijnaptisamadhata He who answers the prayers of His devotees
12. Dinabandhavimochaka He who releases the lowly from bondage
13. Mukharanghripatih He from whose footfall sound originates
14. Sriman The noble One
15. Mrda He whose form is Bliss
16. Mrgamadesvara He who is fond of musk
17. Bhaktaprekshanakrit He who makes His devotees His messengers
18. Sakshi The Witness
19. Bhaktadoshanivartaka He who removes the delusion of His devotees
20. Sangitavetta He who is expert in music
21. Nrittajna He who is proficient in the art of dancing
22. Trivedi Lord of the three Vedas
23. Vrddhavaidika The Ancient One of the Vedas
24. Tyagaraja The Ocean of Compassion
25. Krasindhu The merciful one
26. Sugandhi The sweet-scented One
27. Sourabhesvara The Lord of the Bull
28. Kartaviryesvara The Lord of Kartavirya
29. Santa The Peaceful One
30. Kapali The wearer of skulls
31 Kalasaprabhu . . The Lord of the ceremonial pitcher in which all gods are worshipped
32 Jnanasambandhanatha . . Lord of Jnanasambandha
33 Sri Halalasundara . . The Lord who consumed the deadly poison
34 Abvaisvaryadatta . . He who confers prosperity spontaneously
35 Smarttsarvaghanasana . . He who removes the impurities of those who think of Him
36 Vyatyantranriya . . He who raised the left foot in dancing
37 Dhvajadhrk . . Bearer of the banner
38 Sakantih . . The bright One
39 Natesa . . Lord of dancing
40 Samapriya . . Lover of the Sama Veda
41 Papahana . . Destroyer of sin
42 Vedamurti . . Embodiment of the Vedas
43 Niranjana . . The taintless One
44 Jagannatha . . Lord of the world
45 Mahadeva . . The Great God
46 Trinetra . . The three-eyed God
47 Tripurantaka . . Destroyer of the three cities
48 Bhaktaparadhasoda . . He who pardons the faults of His devotees
49 Yogisa . . King of yogis
50 Bhoganayaka . . Lord of enjoyments
51 Kalamurihi . . Embodiment of Time
52 Kshamarupi . . Embodiment of forgiveness
53 Dharmarakshaka . . Protector of Dharma
54 Vrishadhvaja . . He whose banner bears the emblem of the Bull
55 Hara . . The Destroyer
56 Girisvara . . Lord of the Hill
57 Chandrarekhavatamsaka . . The wearer of the Crescent Moon
58 Smarantaka .. The foe of Kama (Cupid)
59 Andhakaripu .. The destroyer of the demon Andhaka
60 Siddharaja .. The All-powerful One
61 Digambara .. He for whom the quarters are clothes
62 Isana .. The Originator
63 Devadeva .. Deva of devas
64 Bhasmarudraksha-lanchana .. The wearer of the sacred ash and rudraksha beads
65 Sripatih .. Lord of wealth
66 Sankara .. The Gracious One
67 Srashta .. The Creator
68 Sarvavidyesvara .. He who is well-versed in the arts
69 Anagha .. He who is faultless
70 Gangadhara .. The wearer of the Ganga
71 Kratudhvamsi .. Destroyer of the sacrifice
72 Vimala .. He who is without blemish
73 Nagabhushana .. Wearer of the serpent
74 Aruna .. He who is fiery and therefore without form
75 Bahurupa .. He who has many forms
76 Virupaksha .. The possessor of the Infinite Eye
77 Aksharakrtih .. He whose form is Akshara
78 Anadirantarahita .. He who has no beginning or end
79 Sivakama .. He who desires the welfare of all
80 Swayamprabhu .. He who is His own chief
81 Satchidanandarupa .. He whose form is Being-Consciousness-Bliss
82 Sarvatma .. The Self of all
83 Jivadharaka .. The supporter of all
84 Strisangavamasubhaga .. He from whom emanates Sakti (Power) and who is the most beautiful One
85 Vibitasundara .. The One who is beautiful when taken out in procession
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jnanaprada</td>
<td>The Teacher of Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muktida</td>
<td>The bestower of Liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaktavanchitadayaka</td>
<td>Granter of devotees' prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascharyavaibhava</td>
<td>The possessor of wonderful glory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kami</td>
<td>He who is full of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niravadhya</td>
<td>He who is free from evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nidhiprada</td>
<td>The bestower of wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarvanami</td>
<td>The possessor of all names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manovasa</td>
<td>The dweller in the mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarva</td>
<td>The Lord of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunagirivasa</td>
<td>The Lord of Arunagiri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"These are my principal names. Remember also the divine names mentioned in the puranas. Worship me everyday with these names and as prescribed in the Agamas."

---

**SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

By Joel S. Goldsmith

The person of spiritual vision does not believe that spiritual qualities can be purchased externally. Rather he has arrived at the realization that they come from some fountain within his own being.

In our evolution from material sense to spiritual consciousness, we learn through experience that there is an invisible substance. Some call it God. Some call it Spirit, Soul, or Consciousness. The name is not important. The important thing is that there is an invisible substance within our own being, and out of it the good things of life are formed. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for," *(Hebrews, 11:1)* which we interpret to mean that Consciousness is the substance of things hoped for, and out of Consciousness, out of our Soul come the issues of life.

Those of us who have gone through life seeking satisfaction, joy, peace, prosperity and health in the outer realm already know what a thankless job it is and how unsatisfactory the process is and to what degree we fail. That is why we are on the Path. We have found that seeking our good in the outer world has not produced what we have sought.
We reproduce here the Ms. of *Sri Arunachala Linga Pramanya Vakyani*, which is in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan (pp. 82 - 84).

The circumstances in which this was prepared are explained below:

In 1938 the authorities of Sri Arunachaleswara temple filed a law suit regarding the ownership of Sri Arunachala Hill which was being claimed by the Government (as Forestry Department property). The temple authorities cited Bhagavan Sri Ramananda Maharshi as a witness. On May 8, 1938, the court sent a commission to record Sri Bhagavan’s evidence.

In order to enable the court to decide the issue, Sri Bhagavan selected some passages from the *Skanda Mahapurana* and the *Siva Mahapurana* to prove that Arunachala Hill is itself a *Linga*, the very embodiment of Lord Siva (These are two of the eighteen principal *puranas*, and as such they are recognized as works of great sanctity and authority). In all he selected fiftysix lines from the *Skanda Mahapurana* and four lines from the *Siva Mahapurana*. He copied these lines in a notebook under the title *Sri Arunachala Linga Pramanya Vakyani* (statements giving authoritative proof that the Arunachala Hill is a *Linga*). On the basis of this evidence, the court decided that, since the Hill is itself a *linga*, it must be considered to be the property of the temple.

The note-book (containing this Ms.) also contains passages from *Upamanyu Bhakta Vilasa* on Arunachala as well as verses regarding *Lingodbhavakala*.

A translation of the Ms. is furnished between pages 85 and 87.
(शिरी सहस्राणम्)

|| श्री अरुणाचलमाहालयम् ||

स्वान्दमहापुराणे

रचना:
लिङ्गनी पुरुषोत्सवादिन्यापनकृपानिःश्री सुश्रीविनये भृजती सुनितानि सुरतानि

1

यद्रिग नामः दिवं मर्हकीन्व वेताल्मुः
स्वं भु जागेस हृदे मैतास नवदर्शेः ॥ १ ॥

जयति मदसुतं सैल माति भूतं यथापुरा
अविलोकतपं स्वायापं महान्यरिमिः ॥ २ ॥

अहं नारायणाऽश्रृङ्गोऽजस्तः विश्वापति दृष्टमात् ॥ २ ॥
स्वभावेन समुद्रवतः शिवदुरायोऽपलपम् ॥ २ ॥

परस्परं रूपवालां माण्डुरो रतिभीश्चाम्
आलोकव्यक्षणा मूर्तिः राजिन्यवदुशेषः ॥ २ ॥

आप्यो चूँकाय ये कठः समुद्रतः ॥ २ ॥

विवेचना ॥

12 उपसंहार तेजसः महाशिचल संहार ॥

अवस्थावर लिङ्गातं लोकानुग्रह वाराणात् ॥ ३ ॥

इश्वर:
अहं नारायणां रूपेण प्रासः रघुवर लिङ्गातां ॥ ५ ॥
तेजसं लिङ्ग मैत्रिः सर्वालोकेऽकाळ महानां

अहं गृहिष्ठा रितिभवान् दृष्टेऽवसुभा तत्कः ॥ ५ ॥

14 अहं तेजसं रूपमार्श्यवसुभाताते ॥

वसामित्राः स्विनं श्रीकाशरं महालक्ष्मीता तंकुश्य ॥ ३६ ॥

रुपं सर्वेऽस्मे: पपि: पापसंध्वसः

रुपोऽग्निः यथायाम् दृष्टे तेजाणाचऽपलाय ॥ ३८ ॥

मनुष्यजाताः पुष्युष्यतो अष्ट्रकृष्णायोः
अहं मौद्र मपाहृताः तेजः सर्वो भविष्यते: ॥ ५४ ॥
प्राचीन स्कृत स्तोत्र यहूदी संस्कृत संस्कृत
आदि जैसा न हजार महा स्थानर लिंगमान्। ॥ ५३ ॥

अरुणाचल नामाङ्ग तिथामीलब्धी स्विदः ॥
अरुणाचलस्व माहात्मयो भवत्व भवनुस्वातः। ॥ ५४ ॥
पुरा ब्रह्मच बिष्णुक्र्ष्यो शिव तेजोऽसा संभवः। ॥ ५५ ॥
साहेकारे युयुपातुः परस्पर लिमागः।
तथात्यो जीवसंन्यसः योगी पुर्वः सदाशिवः। ॥ ५६ ॥
अय्य सैलोपकुरुक्षुपायः मातिः मध्यक्तर वर्णितम्।
संप्रायम्यतरं तन्त्रं वेदोऽदिदृश्यविनिर्मायान्। ॥ ५७ ॥
त्वाभिषित ध्येयेषो व्यापारय श्रवणाम्। ॥ ५८ ॥

अरुणाचले रितिरुवातः प्रशान्तं संप्रकाशोऽ ते ॥ ५९ ॥
अरुणाचलं ह्यंपूः तिथामिः जसुपातके। ॥ ६० ॥
तदेव तेजसं रूप महानाचल संहितम्। ॥ ६१ ॥
तेजोमय मिदुर्स्व प्रमाणं विश्रामान्तः कोकर्षणात्।

युद्धिनय महापतिः द्वारा गुणान्वेष वैभवम्। ॥ ६२ ॥
देवः। —
अगवर्णार्थीस्व सर्वोलक्षितादि हृदात्वह। ॥ ६३ ॥
अय्य स्पष्टम् संस्त्रान्त: प्रकाशस्व महेरतन॥ ॥ ६४ ॥
स्मान्तोऽरुणार्थीर्ह: श्रीगा नन्दोविशिष्टम्। ॥ ६५ ॥
सैलोकमित्वं मध्यथ मुषः सातात्वं सङ्कापल।

दद्यन्ते जन्मुस्लाभो श्रीपाणार्थी स्विदविश्वतः। ॥ ६६ ॥
एक माति सबकिंग नकाशिः दृश्यता। ॥ ६७ ॥

अर्थ सदाशिवः साक्षा दृश्याचल रूपतः। ॥ ६८ ॥
दद्यन्ते परमेव तेजः सर्पिष्ठतयत्त कारणाम्। ॥ ६९ ॥
अस्तुऽगायनं केवलरथ नमस्तुऽगायति

स्त्रवते कर्म भूरेण तैन परमपरमात्मा मला।

तत्सत्यम्—तत्सत्यम्—

"॥ ६॥ तन्नेति: स्वयंसंभु: परेऽताकारं त्वात्॥
अरुणाचलं संज्ञावन्ति तोऽविद्यवद्:॥ १५॥
सुवनींर्जिलेन कैलाससः दुर्यस्तोऽनन्दराधिकः॥ २१॥
माननी यो महाभौं न इत्वपच्यां परमेश्वरः:॥ १४॥
माया रात्रे: समेऽस्ते नेवेऽकैलासो नन्दयु:॥ ६॥८॥
"॥ १६॥ शुभाय तेजस्मूर्तिः स्थावराभि सम द्वाश्वति॥
अरुणाञ्जलिः तिरति र्याताः नित्येक्षतरति वर्तताम्:॥ २६॥
"॥ २०॥ अरुणाचलं र्यंसाधक्य दुन्याणी: स्तिरोऽहित:॥ २९॥
"॥ २५॥ शिव महापूरणे—

"॥ ९॥ अलंकारं संज्ञायां यदिदुः लिङ सुर्खेत्तम:।
अस्तुऽगायति मित्रेन तदिदुः र्यातिः मेवयति॥ २९॥
यदिदुः निष्केन स्तवभि सम प्रद्धलोऽधिम कः॥ ४१॥
स्त्रवते कर्म भूरेण तैन परमरः समस्ततवा: ॥ ५२॥

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

Aradhana
Linga Pramanya Vakyani
Sri Arunachala Mahatmyam
FROM SKANDA MAHAPURANA
(FIRST HALF)
(Reference Note on p.81)

CHAPTER ONE
Sanaka said to Brahma:
9. O repository of Grace, O foremost among devas, on earth there are some Sivalingas which are divine, some are installed by human beings and siddhas, and some others are composed of the five elements.

10. Tell me, which linga in Jambudvipa is immaculate, divine, of unmutatable glory, self-originated and effulgent.

Brahma said:
22. Hear how in ancient days the wonderful and effulgent Siva, who is full of motiveless grace, manifested with the name Arunadri.

23. (First line). Narayana and I were born from Him (Sadasiva) who transcends the universe.

24. (First line). Once we two, who were self-born, began to argue with each other.

25. Seeing the intensity with which we were fighting with each other, Iswara (Lord Siva), who is the embodiment of Grace, then thought.

CHAPTER TWO
Brahma and Vishnu prayed to Lord Siva:
31. Withdrawing Your effulgence, abide as an inanimate Linga named Arunachala in order to bestow grace upon the world.

Isvara said:
50. (Second line). The nature of an inanimate Linga in the form of Arunachala was assumed [by Siva].

51. This indeed is the Effulgent Linga, the sole cause of the universe, which is visible on earth and which is renowned as Arunadri.

---

1 Jambudvipa, the island of Jambu, is a name given to the land mass in which India is situated.
2 Arunadri is another name of Arunachala.
3 What Lord Siva then thought is given in verses 26 to 30, which do not form part of this selection. A translation of these verses may be found in The Mountain Path, April 1970, p.66.
CHAPTER FOUR

37. I truly abide here on earth in the form of an Effulgence named Arunachala for bestowing Liberation.

38. Since this Hill removes the heap of sins from all the worlds, and since bondage (runa) gets annihiliated when one sees it, it is named Arunachala. 4

40. In ancient days, when a fight arose between Brahma and Vishnu, who were both born from a part of me, I manifested myself in the form of an Effulgence in order to remove their delusion.

43. At their further request I, who was in an Effulgent Form, became the inanimate Linga named Arunachala.

CHAPTER FIVE

Devi said to Gautama:

24. Siva told me, “I abide on earth as Arunachala,” and said that I should hear the glory of Arunachala from your lips.

Gautama said:

42. (Second line) and 43 (First line). In ancient days Brahma and Vishnu, who had come into existence from a part of the Effulgence of Siva, but who had become egoistic, fought with a desire to conquer each other.

43. (Second line) and 44. In order to subdue the pride of these two, who were fighting in this manner, Sadasiva, who is meditated upon by yogis, assumed the form of a Column of Fire without beginning, middle or end, and stood between them illumining the ten directions.

47. At their request, Devesa (Lord Siva, the Lord of devas) subdued His own effulgence and assumed the form of an inanimate Linga renowned as Arunadri and He now shines as such (in calmness).

CHAPTER SIX

Iswara said:

21. (First line). I abide on earth in the form of Arunachala.

22. (Second line). That Effulgent Form alone is called Arunachala.

23. This Effulgent Form, which is fiery, unmanifest and of the nature of limitless glory, has cooled down in order to protect the world.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The devas said:

9. O Bhagavan, O Arunadrisa, O you who do good to the whole world! Although you

4 A-runa-achala means the Hill (achala) which makes bondage (runa) non-existent. This verse has been rendered into Tamil by Sri Bhagavan as the fourth of the seven verses on the greatness of Arunachala, which he adapted from the puranas. The literal meaning of Sri Bhagavan’s Tamil rendering, which is an elaboration upon the meaning of the original Sanskrit verse is as follows: “Since their nature is to bind all the worlds, the vicious actions (karmas) are bondage (runa). This Hill indeed is the Effulgent Arunachala (the Hill that destroys bondage), the refuge, by seeing which they (the karmas) vanish.”

5 The reading copied in this selection by Sri Bhagavan is taijasam rupam, which means ‘Effulgent Form’. An alternative reading is taijasam lingam, which means ‘Effulgent Linga’. 
are of the form of fire, do Thou shine calmly in the world.

Gautama said:

5. Having been prayed to by the devas, Arunadrisa gradually cooled down and became perfectly tranquil as Arunachala in order to protect the world.

CHAPTER EIGHT

20. (First line). You (Lord Siva) are seen on earth as the famous Sonadri.

17. (First line). Nowhere else on earth have I seen even one linga in the form of a Hill.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Brahma said:

43. This is Sadasiva Himself in the form of Arunachala, which is seen as the Supreme Effulgence, the cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution.

44. This Effulgent Linga is worshipped by all the devas. Because of that (the existence of this Linga on earth), the karma bhumi is considered to possess more dharma than any other world.

SECOND HALF (Uttarardham)

CHAPTER FOUR

Nandikesvara said:

12. There God, Sambhu, the One who does what is good for the world, has Himself assumed the form of a Hill and abides as Arunachala.

14. This Hill, which is Parameswara Himself, is considered by Maharshis to be superior to Meru, Kailasa and Mandara.

58. (Second line) and 59. Neither Meru nor Kailasa nor Mandara are equal to Arunadri, because they are abodes of Lord Siva made up of huge rocks, whereas this (Arunachala) is Girisa Himself.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Siva said:

27. For the welfare of the world, may my Effulgent Form, which is inanimate and eternal, abide here forever with the name Arunadri.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Gautama said:

21. (first line). This Arunadri is the Hill of Fire itself in a concealed form.

FROM SIVA MAHAPURANA
(VIDYESWARA SAMHITA)

CHAPTER NINE

Isvara said:

21. Since this Linga rose up as a Hill of Fire, it shall be renowned as Arunachala (the Red Hill).

41. (Second line) and 42 (first line). Since this formless column, which reveals my Brahmavatva (my nature as Brahma), possesses the characteristics of a linga, it shall be my Linga.

---

6 Sonadri is a name of Arunachala.
7 Karma bhumi is a name for this earth.
8 Girisa (the Lord of the Hill) i.e. Lord Siva.
This is God’s Hill in which it pleaseth Him to dwell:
Yea, the Lord will abide in it for ever.
Almost from the time the young Maharshi came to Tiruvannamalai and until 1926 he used to perform pradakshinam (going round a sacred person or object) of the hill several times a year. One would like to know what this practice means and why he should take to it so frequently.

Round the hill runs a good metalled road about eight miles long, bordered by fine, shady trees, numerous tanks, and mantapams or temples on both sides. This is the Pradakshinam Road along which one can see pious crowds moving any day of the week (especially on Tuesdays). They first bathe in some sacred tank, put on clean clothing, smear the forehead (or even the body) with holy ashes, wear perhaps beads of rudraksha (symbolical of God Siva) and then start on their pious circuit. A few start alone, as in many respects solitude is recommended to get the best results. On their way they bow to, and circle round many a holy person, temple or image. Some insist on having a few drops of the holy waters of all the tanks sprinkled over their heads or even bathe in them. A few roll over the entire eight miles, using their bodies like a road-roller (anga pradakshinam), taking several days to complete this feat. A few others combine Atma Pradakshinam with this Giripradakshinam, i.e., turning round and round themselves on the road at short intervals. Some persons stop and bow to or fall prostrate before God (Arunachala Siva) as symbolized by the Hill at short intervals. Various are the ways in which people express their devotion to the Hill. The majority however avoid ostentation and extremes, and content themselves with walking slowly with the mind intent on God.

When Maharshi starts, the entire Ashram starts with him, as everyone is eager to accompany him. Sometimes they start at nightfall after a meal and return just at dawn. Sometimes they start in the morning and take a day or two to return. One may wonder why

so many hours or days are required to walk eight miles, which could be done in three hours. But Maharshi goes on these circuits mainly to set an example to and to confer benefit on others. *Arunachala Purana* says that one must walk as slowly as a princess in the tenth month of her pregnancy, not even the foot-fall being heard. Again Maharshi often moves in a state of *samadhi*: such an intense ecstasy implies slow and even breath and absence of haste or exertion. So he moves at the rate of one mile per hour, and rests for some fifteen minutes or so in suitable places which are available at every mile or even half-mile. While engaged in this circuit he enjoys the bliss of the Atman and cares not for the sounds and sights. He is in the Universal centre, in the only Reality, in the Being of beings.

Some years back, on one of these occasions, Maharshi composed his *Aksharamanamalai*—an acrostic of one hundred and eight stanzas upon Arunachala—the stanzas beginning with the successive letters of the Tamil alphabet. He composed *Arunachala Ashtakam* (eight stanzas on Arunachala) on a later occasion. As there is more sequence of thought in these later stanzas the gist of them may be given here to enable the reader to follow the Maharshi's thoughts during that circuit.

1. A boy, I came to Thee,  
   Not knowing what Thou wert,  
   I came up here and saw,  
   And found Thou wert a Hill.

2. But who is then the seer?  
   Deep into that I probed.  
   No seer then remained;  
   No mind survived at all

To say that this I saw,  
Or e'en to say didn't.  
As Dakshinamoorthy once,  
Silent Thou taught'st the truth.  
Thou dost the same e'en now,  
Thou silent standing Hill!  
If Thou forbear to speak  
Who else can voice Thy truth?

3. Well can one say of Thee  
   That Thou in form art seen.  
   Yet truly can he speak  
   Thee formless and unseen.  
   Ah! Who can know Thy nature?  
   Can any plumb Thy depths?  
   To sound the Ocean's depth  
   With measuring tape in hand  
   A sugar doll once plunged  
   And lost itself for e'er.  
   Thus trying Thee to know,  
   Thyself must one become.

4. Oh, Thou art That which is;  
   The only thing that is.  
   Yet men run here and there  
   In quest of many Gods!  
   But raise inquiry's torch  
   And seek the truth of Gods,  
   These Gods then fly away  
   As darkness from the light.  
   And what remains is Thou,  
   That gave each creed its God.  
   Thy light is as the Sun's.  
   Who sees not Thee is blind.  
   Oh, mayst thou shed Thy light,  
   Within my heart for ever!

5. Thou art the central string  
   Sustaining earthly creeds  
   E'en as thou dost sustain
Whatever moves or lives.
When mind cremates itself
And inward vision gains,
And further plunges deep,
Ah, then is seen Thy light.
When once Thy light is gained,
Avaunt! All earthly fears;
All objects — shows — depart.
The mind's a sensitive plate.
If Brahman's solar rays
Do once upon it fall
'T is sensitive no more;
There objects of the world
No more impression make.
And is there aught in truth
Besides Thy glorious self?

"These thoughts arise to me."
His question next must be,
"Who is this 'I' and whence?"
Thus let him seek the source
From which the 'I' thought springs, —
The source that's nam'd the Heart.
And when the Heart is reach'd,
Swarajya sure is gain'd,
Where difference is gone
Of virtue and of vice,
Of self and of not-self,
Of sorrow and of joy.
No death is there, nor birth,
No darkness, nor seen light.
All these illusions fly,
Before Thy glorious blaze.

6. Thou art the only Real,
The centre Light, the Heart.
Thine is the wondrous pow'r
That off from Thee is not.
That power whirls the roll
Of subtle films of mind
Before Thy pure white light,
Thus colour'd forms stream forth
Athwart the mental lens,
On Thee, the seeming screen,
As in a cinema show.
The many change and pass,
The one, remainest Thou,

8. The waters of the ocean
By sun and wind upraised
As cloud and rain descend
Down hill and slope as streams
To reach again their source,
The Ocean, and there rest.
The feather'd tribe that leaves
Its leafy home on earth
And restless, on the wing,
E'er wanders far and wide
At last to find its rest,
Its starting place regains.
Oh Arunachala great!
'T is from Thy wisdom's ocean,
The Jivas' flow'd of yore.
'Tis from thy tree of life,
These birds took flight in air.
Now that they long for rest.
Inquiring what's their source,
They flow or fly to Thee
Their ocean or their tree.

7. Of thoughts, the 'I' is first,
'T is only after that,
'You,' 'he,' 'she,' 'it,' 'they,' 'these'
And other thoughts appear.
But if these thoughts arise,
One should not yield to them.
"To whom do these arise?"
Must be his only thought.
The answer comes out clear, —

1 Jivas means individual souls
There is nothing more to write of what occupies Maharshi's mind during these circuits. The rest of this chapter will deal with the way in which his entourage conduct themselves and the benefit they derive. His fame is so great and the merit of supplying food to him is so highly prized that as soon as people hear of his starting on the circuit they prepare or obtain articles of food, wait at a number of wayside buildings, and request him and his group to stop and partake of their offerings. Sometimes they cook there and feed (especially if the circuit is by day) the whole group. As one might expect, most of the followers are attracted by the religious merit of the circuit, by the “loaves and fishes” and the “pots of manna” and some by sheer curiosity. But even fools who come with grosser ends in view get some spiritual benefit by observing the noble and inspiring conduct of Maharshi and his chief disciples: the impressions of the circuit soak unnoticed into their subconscious minds where they germinate, grow and fructify, and hasten the awakening.

Let us see what the Maharshi's chief followers do and think on these occasions. It is a trite saying that the same objects are seen by different people differently, by reason of the difference in their equipment, attitude, etc. Some of the Maharshi’s followers have always been quite prosaic, matter of fact men, of whom it may justly be said,

“A primrose by the river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him
And it was nothing more,”

while of others it might truly be said:

“To them the meanest flower that blows
Can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

We shall take up the latter class and see how they view the holy perambulation and what benefits they derive from it.

To begin with, let us take the Hill itself. To the pious devotees, it drops its material nature and assumes a spiritual one. It is no longer earth and rock. Touched by the magic of devotion, it becomes suffused with light and stands out as the symbol of the Supreme Lord of the Universe — nay as the Lord Himself. Its physical properties are now the attributes of Divinity and excite the deepest and loftiest emotions. What a sense of confidence its mighty strength and benevolence inspire! What serenity and detachment, what lofty aspiration they feel as they behold its 'starry-pointing' peak that sheds heaven's blessed waters on all sides to fertilise and nourish the plains and to give men and beasts alike their food and drink!

What enduring, uniform and all-embracing love toward all sentient creatures permeates and transforms the devotees as they find cheetahs and cattle, cobras and cave-dwelling ascetics flourishing side by side on its bosom! And to the very select few who can rise to the heights of non-different, characterless ecstasy, how helpful are its firmness and its unity in variety!

The more they direct their attention to the Hill, the more it absorbs them into itself. Just a few thoughts of its external form, and then lo! they sink deep, deep within. Some
address themselves to Lord Arunachala and according to their varying moods praise and dance or pray and weep. One Gajanana, who stayed for some months with the Maharshi, was full of fervent faith in Sree Hari (Lord Vishnu). He would constantly sing songs from *Srimad Bhagavata* and would dance in his joy most of the way round the hill. Others poured forth their soul in the language of *Sivanandalahari, Tevaram, Tiruppugazh, Aksharamanamalai*, etc., aided by cymbals and tambur, drum (*mridangam*) and fiddle.

The last, but by no means the least, of the pilgrims is the one who goes on repeating silently the dear Lord's name (such as the *Panchakshari*) and by dint of meditation becomes himself the object of his own 'thought.' Then really thought is not. In enjoyment it expires.

[Note: More than twenty years before the end Maharshi gave up these circuits of the hill, as what should have been a source of edification for all developed with the growing crowds into something far different, many coming just for the novelty of it. — Publisher.]

One need not be surprised at his singing of Sri Mahavishnu in this *Sivakshetram* and when going round Siva. There is no intolerance or sharp difference between the two cults of Siva and Vishnu here. The temple and Hill were originally Mahavishnu's. Even now Sri Vaishnavites regard the Hill as Sudarsana the sacred wheel (of Time perhaps) in the hands of God. And just behind the image of Siva in the big temple is the image of Sri Venugopala (a form of Sri Mahavishnu) in whose name the temple site still stands registered.

---

### 'This' or 'I'?

*Kuppuswamy Iyer* an old devotee once narrated the following episode at the Old Hall in the course of a talk with another (younger) devotee.

One morning Sri Bhagavan was going through his routine of perusing the mail. He paused for a while and exclaimed, 'Oh! Self-realisation has come!'

Sri Bhagavan was remarking on the contents of a postcard written by a devotee to the Ashram. The devotee reporting his arrival at Salem (from the Ashram) had written, "'This' has arrived in Salem from Tiruvannamalai" (instead of saying in the normal manner, 'I have arrived at Salem from Tiruvannamalai')

Sri Bhagavan had such a nice way of pulling up people when they made pretentious statements!

Kuppuswamy Iyer, a staunch devotee was popularly known as 'castor oil' Kuppuswamy Iyer (since he kept the Ashram supplied with this oil!). It is long since he passed away.
Chanting of the Divine Name: The Message of Bodhendra

By N.R.S. Manian

The Thanjavur region has a distinct position in the cultural map of India. The achievements of the people of this region with special reference to the fields of painting, sculpture and music are of outstanding value. The achievements in the field of religion are no less. It should be mentioned here that the patronage extended by the enlightened rulers (of Thanjavur) has been the motive force in the main behind such all-round development. The rulers were interested not merely in running the state in routine fashion. They went further and promoted higher values. They conducted themselves with due deference to the great personalities in their dominion. We owe a great deal to Raja Sahaji and Raja Serfoji, the Mahratta rulers of Thanjavur, for their substantial and consistent support to the cause of religion. The period of nearly half a century — extending from 1684 to 1728 — may therefore be rightly called the golden era of Thanjavur.

Andhra Desa and Karnataka were freely invited to come and live in Tamil Nadu and make their own contributions in various fields.

Bodhendra — whose name in full was Bhagavan Nama Bodhendra Saraswati — was the 59th pontiff of the Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha. He was a contemporary of Sadasiva Brahmendra and Sridhara Ayyaval. The names of Sadguru Swamy and Tirtha Narayana also have relevance here. These saints belong in general to the period commencing from the earlier years of the seventeenth century and ending with the eighteenth. Tirtha Narayana's period however overlaps into the nineteenth.

Born as the son of Kesava Pandurangayogi and Suguna in the beginning of the seventeenth century at Kanchipuram, Sri Bodhendra was initially named Purushottaman. This name was assigned by Viswadhikendra Saraswati, the Jagadguru of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham (He was also called Atma Bodhendra Saraswati). The Master also brought up the child at the Kanchi Mutt itself. The child Purushottaman, under the loving care of Atma Bodhendra, learnt the Veda...
and Vedanta thoroughly even before he was sixteen. He was an adept in other sastras as well.

At a certain juncture Viswadhikendra Swami left for Kashi for the sake of a holy bath in the Ganga. His instruction to his disciple Purushottaman was that he can follow suit after sometime, since he (the master) would be at Kashi for a year. Accordingly, Purushottaman left for Kashi, along with his friend Jnanasagaran, at the proper time.

The understanding between Purushottaman and Jnanasagaran was that if one of them happened to die on the way (to Kashi), the survivor should perform the last rites of the dead one, carry the news to the guru and eventually commit suicide by drowning himself in Ganga. It so happened that Janansagaran did die of high fever on the way — on the banks of the Godavari! As per the agreement already entered into, Purushottaman performed the funeral rites of his friend Jnanasagaran and duly reported the matter to Viswadhikendra Swami, on reaching Kashi. Of course he also conveyed his resolve to drown himself in the Ganga.

Viswadhikendra Swami dissuaded him from his plan for suicide. His instruction was that Purushottaman should take to sannyasa. This would mean a second birth. He cited the analogy of Adi Shankara in this regard, who was released from the clutches of death when caught by a crocodile. When he undertook to enter into sannyasa asrama, the crocodile released him. He was considered to have taken a second birth from that moment. By assuming the life of a sannyasin, Purushottaman’s undertaking to Jnanasagaran would be fulfilled and his life also spared for all the good work he was destined to do in future. Meanwhile Viswadhikendra Swami had come into contact with Narasimhasrami Swami, a great tapasvin of Benares, who was convinced of the efficacy of nama sankirtana (chanting of the Divine Name). He was much interested in propagating this ideal. The two swamis met regularly and held discussions. Viswadhikendra felt that nama sankirtana was not done as extensively in the South as it was in the North. He had the intuitive feeling that Purushottaman, his disciple, was the one who was competent to undertake this work. Therefore he groomed him for this purpose.

Purushottaman was initiated by the master into sannyasa and given the name Bhagavan Nama Bodhendra Saraswati. He was also nominated as the successor to Viswadhikendra and became the 59th pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha.

The master instructed Bodhendra to proceed to Kanchipuram and compile works establishing the greatness of nama siddhanta (chanting the divine name). He was to visit Puri Jagannatha Kshetra on the way and collect a copy of Bhagavan Nama Kaumudi of Lakshmi Sridhara.

Bodhendra, after visiting Gaya and Bhubhaneswar, arrived at Puri and came to the house of Jagannatha Pandita, the son of Lakshmi Sridhara. Here he met a brahmin couple who had a serious problem. The lady had been molested and carried away by a Muslim during a journey and they were united again due to lucky circumstances. However the pollution was there and they
wanted to know how the purificatory rite should be performed. The couple came to Jagannatha Pandita. Unhesitatingly Pandita prescribed the remedial measure. The wife could be taken back by her husband after she repeated the name of Rama thrice (this was enough to purify her).

Bodhendra's presence at this spot was a surprise to all those assembled. He demanded from Jagannatha Pandita the authority for the manner of purification (or efficacy of uttering Rama Nama) suggested. Pandita at once produced Bhagavan Nama Kaumudi. Bodhendra went through this work during the night. His instruction to the lady was that she should present herself at the Pushkarini of Sri Puri Jagannatha Swamy temple in the morning, clad in the clothes of a Muslim and take bath in the holy waters after uttering Rama Nama. If she emerged from the waters in the dress of a Hindu lady with kumkum (vermillion mark) it would be proof of her purification.

To the surprise of all, things happened exactly in this manner. The lady came out of the waters dressed as a Hindu with a vermillion mark on the forehead! The whole crowd then chanted Rama Nama. The efficacy of the Divine Name was vindicated.

Viswadhikendra now arrived at Kanchipuram. He was very happy to go through the works of Bodhendra. Entrusting the affairs of the Kanchi Math to Bodhendra, Viswadhikendra decided to go to Rameswaram. Bodhendra accompanied him. However, on the way to Rameswaram, Viswadhikendra attained mahasamadhi at Garuda Tirrham (near Tiruppappuliur). The samadhi of Viswadhikendra was established on the banks of the Garuda river. Bodhendra completed the visit to Rameswaram (It is not clear whether he did so immediately after the samadhi of his guru, or sometime later. There are conflicting accounts on this point). He returned to Kanchipuram.

He now met Sridhara Venkatesa (Ayyaval), the great spiritual personality who lived at Tiruvisanallur. The meeting between the two was emotional in the sense that it led to genuine appreciation at a high level. It was momentous in the sense that it led to purposeful interaction between the two as a result of which the glory of the Divine Name was put on a strong footing. Thousands of people took to nama japa as a result of the inspiration provided by the two giants.

Bodhendra at a certain stage nominated Advaita Prakasa as his successor and 60th head of the Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt. Leaving Kanchipuram, he settled at Govindapuram. This is mainly because he wanted to be
relieved of the heavy responsibilities to be
shouldered if he continued as the head of the
Mutt. It was also because of his keenness to
live in the proximity of Sridhara (Ayyaval).

Bodhendra is stated to have preferred soli­tude, particularly after the mahasamadhi of
Sridhara (Ayyaval). However he chose to play
with boys and perform miracles in the course
of such play. One of his playful acts was to
bury himself in the pits on the river bed. He
would ask the children to cover up the pit
with sand. They were also asked to help him
come out by removing the sand, by evening.

Once in the course of such a playful act
the children came to release him from the
sand, as usual, but could not find him! A voice
from an unknown source was heard saying,
“We will remain here in a siddha sarira for
the welfare of the world. We will be doing
nama sankirtana for ever through our yogic
powers. A brindavan may be built over this
place.” It was Bodhendra speaking! This is
stated to have happened in 1692.

The samadhi day of Bodhendra is being
observed annually with regularity at
Govindapuram for a period of fifteen days,
— between the last week of September and
the first week of October. Harikatha by ex­
erts is conducted during this period. A large
number of devotees pay homage at the
samadhi. At night the faithful still hear the
chanting of the name of Rama by Bodhendra
who is present at the adhivitanam in the state
of jiva samadhi.

The original brindavan built at the site
of Bodhendra’s jiva samadhi was washed
away once. It was left to Sadguru Swamy to
locate the site and rebuild the brindavan.
This he did by fervent prayer and the most
strenuous efforts. During his frantic search
for locating the adhivitanam he heard at one
point the sweet voice of Bodhendra chant­
ing the name of Rama (he was crawling and
keeping his ears close to the river sands for
this purpose).

The rationale behind nama japa, with spe­
cial reference to the teachings of Bodhendra
and Sridhara (Ayyaval) may be summarised
as follows:

Nama japa (chanting of the divine Name)
is a simple method which leads to the highest
goal. There are no elaborate rules for practice
as in the case of regular, conventional rituals.
All that is required is sincerity and steadfast­
ness. In modern times performance of Vedic
rituals is rendered difficult on account of vari­
fous factors. Vedic scholars are hard to find and
there is great difficulty in procuring dravya
(material) of the required grade of purity.
Equally difficult is the maintenance of the
venue (for rituals like homa etc) in a state of
cleanliness.

There is no such difficulty in merely ut­
tering the name of Siva, Rama or Krishna.
The Sruti as well as Smritis like Bhagavata,
Vishnu Sahasranama and the like specifically
mention the efficacy of nama japa, as a means
of salvation.

Speaking of the name of Siva, Sridhara
says:

O Name of Shiva [Himself] or other gods.
O Mother! Where are they and where am
The Benefits of Studying the Lives of Saints

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

(ONCE when I opened my mail there was a letter from a distant country with a thought-provoking question. “Why,” inquired the correspondent, “do you waste your time and energy writing about the lives of saints, when it’s far better to comment directly on religious, spiritual and philosophical issues?” My reply is reproduced below.)

Dear friend,

Nowadays there is an unfortunate tendency to ignore the lives of saints and only take into consideration their teachings. But can one really separate their teachings from the unique character of their lives? No, that cannot be done because the two things are inextricably linked. The details relating to the way a sage lived are very interesting and revealing because, among other reasons, his life is the practical expression of his ideals, principles and philosophy. The events in a saint’s life illustrate how he trod the spiritual path and how he behaved in trying situations. A good biographical article with fascinating anecdotes from a saint’s past can often succeed in bringing him to life. When delving into the life of a saint who lived centuries ago, the dead saint suddenly becomes a living person, as it were, once again.

All the great saints lived their teachings to the utmost. There was no dichotomy between their professed beliefs and their actions. They were a far cry from hypocrites who do not practise what they preach. Some saints lived in solitude with the Divine as their sole companion. Their lives demonstrated the truth that lasting peace and happiness can only be found by eschewing the attractions of the world and turning inwards.

The lives of saints are not irrelevant to our own lives. We can glean a lot by examining how they solved their painful psychological problems. The inner battles that they fought and won are not dissimilar to our own mental and emotional turmoil. Whereas most men and women lead miserable lives that are replete with problems, the saints succeeded in finding solutions to life’s deepest difficulties, and, in the process, they became blissfully happy.

Must we not experiment with the very same sadhanas that saints practised, discovering what is best for us by trial and error? Learning valuable lessons from their experience will be immensely helpful in our own spiritual quest.

Writing about saints is an important part of my sadhana for I try to enter into their hearts and minds, in so far as that is possible, and after a time I become, as it were, a personal friend of these rare souls who are the subjects of my essays!

On account of their disciplined lives and frugality as well as their other-worldly atti-
tude to life, the saints managed to bear with uncomplaining dignity the heavy burden of their day-to-day struggle for survival. A good many of these saintly hermits were homeless yet strangely happy. Their austere way of life is an example from which we can learn, particularly because our consumerist values are making us increasingly materialistic and acquisitive. The fact that their material wants were few helped the saints to feel unburdened. They had the key to contentment by reason of the extraordinary simplicity of their lives. There was elegance in their simplicity. This means that saints are worthy of our emulation even in mundane matters.

Some sadhakas are sustained by their devotion to idols. Youngsters feel the need to admire powerful politicians, famous sports stars, celebrated entertainers or multi-millionaires who have deviously amassed great fortunes. If you must have idols, why not select great saints for this purpose? When we start admiring genuinely holy persons, we are compelled to think of their superior intelligence and noble qualities, thus transcending our self-centredness and developing spiritually. These sentiments were echoed by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

Nature lovers enjoy the captivating beauty of a glorious sunset, regardless of whether they see the setting sun in Asia, Europe, Africa or elsewhere. Music lovers listen cheerfully to melodic symphonies, regardless of whether the composers of these works were of working class or aristocratic origin. Similarly, those with spiritual values cannot but treat with profound respect every saint, regardless of his or her religious affiliation. Let us not forget that no religion has a monopoly on spirituality.

Such was his all-embracing outlook that Ramana Maharshi evinced a keen interest in the saints of different faiths. “Be still, and know that I am God” was one of his favourite quotations.²

It is noteworthy that Ramana Maharshi once categorically declared that “The Bible and the Gita are the same.”³

Those words echo the famous Hindu dictum that whereas Truth is one, saints have been expressing it in different ways.

Quite early in life the boy Venkataraman (later known as Ramana) had the good fortune to read a remarkable book covering the lives of sixtythree Saiva saints. It greatly impressed him:

He found at home a copy of Periapuranam which his uncle had borrowed. This was the first religious book that he went through apart from his class lessons and it interested him greatly. It gave him a novel experience — like the first reading of Arabian Nights to many a youth. It transported him to a different world, unlike

---

1 A Psalm of Life.
2 Psalm 46:10 NIV.
3 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, p.140 (6th Edn.).
the dry, uninteresting world he had been accustomed to. That book gives a moving account of the sudden accession of faith, deep love of God, utter self-sacrifice, and sublime communion with Him which marked the lives of the sixty-three Tamil saints. As he read on, surprise, admiration, awe, reverence, sympathy and emulation swept over his soul in succession, thus paying a momentary homage to the grand ideals and ideas that had charmed the hearts and engaged the minds of his countrymen for centuries.4

We can all draw inspiration from the writings of saints. Some of their books are invaluable contributions to sacred literature. These works are reliable guides when the dark clouds of doubt and uncertainty loom large; they are like consoling arms around the shoulders when we are suffering from severe states of depression caused by emotional crises such as incapacitating accidents or family bereavements; they can cheer up persons in low spirits, so that they are encouraged to climb up the mountain path and reach the very summit.

Books by and about saints make excellent reading as they were exceptional human beings, who had mystical experiences. The lives of ordinary folk are dull and boring in comparison with those of saints. I had great fun reading Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda. His vivid descriptions of meetings with remarkable rishis, yogis, philosophers and saints are like scenes from an enjoyable novel. Similarly, one can find lots of unusual and amusing incidents in a book entitled In Quest of God by Swami Ramdas. It is a detailed account of the first year of his travels in India as a wandering God-mad monk; In the Vision of God is an equally engaging narration of his experiences during the subsequent nine years. It is hardly my intention to create the impression that the lives of spiritual aspirants are beds of roses. But if you regard them as big adventures, what does it matter if your spiritual search entails joy or suffering?

The dissolution of the ego, which is the prelude to Liberation and the concurrent state of innocence and purity and receptivity, will be tremendously facilitated by a process of thorough self-examination. Now, there is a great deal of honest self-examination of her many infirmities in the celebrated autobiography called The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus. This saint is better known as St. Teresa of Avila, who dug deep into the innermost recesses of herself and thereafter bloomed into a celestial channel of that which is Nameless.

The scriptures of religions are an inexhaustible source of timeless wisdom, thanks to the untiring efforts of certain saints who painstakingly recorded their many insights, fascinating visions, divine revelations and the like. These precious writings are the legacies that they left, which nicely complement their autobiographies and biographies testifying to their selflessness and compassion in the course of their daily lives. Aren't both these treasures part of your spiritual heritage?

4 Self-Realization: Life & Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi by B.V. Narasimha Swami, p.17 (7th Edn.).
I have written at length in order to convince you of the importance of saints to our spiritual unfoldment. In conclusion, let me suggest that if you take the trouble to become knowledgeable about saints and actually do what they did, you might end up being a saint yourself.

S.W

The Speciality: of Ramana and His Teachings

By Prof. N.R. Krishnamurti Aiyer

RAMANA THE MAN

Maharshi Ramana is a jnani of Himalayan stature. At first sight one sees in him the simplest among the ordinary run of men. His simplicity conceals his real grandeur. He is a playful child among children, a common man among common men, an unassuming beggar among the begging fraternity, perfectly at home among men, women, children, animals and birds as well.

He is a most rational scientist of the soul, strictly conforming to the canons of modern science in his probing research of the most secret aspects of man, life and the universe. Without breathing a word about God, he leads men to live a godly life. An atheist or agnostic who comes to have a verbal bout with him is floored at the very first attack, and gets transformed into a staunch believer in God.

RAMANAS TEACHINGS

The technique of his teaching is thoroughly modern, and scientific to the core. Teachers of science put their pupils to practical work before leading them on to theory. The pupil gets a practical knowledge of the electron by experimental work with the cloud-chamber and the electron microscope before delving in the literature dealing with them. This is like taking one in an airplane and circling over Mount Everest before the novice is taught the technique of climbing the Himalayas to reach Mount Everest.

The Maharshi directs a steady piercing look into the eyes of the devotee. Two pairs of eyes are interlocked in tight embrace. The spiritual energy of the sage grips the ego of the disciple and plunges into the SELF in his HEART. The disciple thus gets a foretaste of the SELF. Later on, by studying the theoretical aspect and practising the technique of SELF-ENQUIRY and assiduous introspective probing the pupil reaches the end point already shown to him by the Master.

In the naked form of the Maharshi one finds a most charming figure overflowing with the milk of human kindness, and spreading around the sweet aroma of peace impregnated with bliss inexpressible. We find in him the great Rishi of ancient India, besides a most rationalistic scientist of the modern age.

Whereas men of science die after a life period this great scientist of the soul lives as an eternal Master in the Maha-lingam (Effigy of SHIVA) installed over his Samadhi in Sri Ramanasramam at Tiruvannamalai. From that Lingam the energy of the Maharshi is gushing forth as from a perennial fountain giving a foretaste of the SELF to the devotee who sits in meditation in the neighbourhood of the Samadhi. The Maharshi shines as the eternal Master in Sri Ramanasramam as also in any part of this wide world and the devotees also feel Him here, there and everywhere.

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, October, 1985.
Sri Ramana Pada Malai
(Garland of Verses in Praise of the Feet of Bhagavan)

By M. Sivaprakasam Pillai

This is a translation of the original text of the author in Tamil.

Back in 1902 Sivaprakasam Pillai, one of the greatest of Sri Bhagavan’s devotees, queried the master as to the nature of Reality. He was fortunate to get the response of Sri Bhagavan in the form of a detailed exposition on ‘I’, the Supreme Reality. This was recorded by Pillai and the compilation is the celebrated Who am I? After compiling Who am I? the author wrote other poems as well.

Sri Ramana Pada Malai is one such. It conveys Sri Bhagavan’s direct and simple instructions on a wide range of spiritual questions.

Refrain: Blessed be, blessed be
(to follow each verse)
The Feet of Lord Ramana,
Blessed be, blessed be
And for ever blessed be!

1. Blessed be the Feet of the Master, the embodiment of Grace. Blessed be the Knower of the Veda whose Feet remove ignorance and confer Knowledge.

2. Blessed be the Feet of God who attracts the minds of those who see Him. Blessed be His Feet, the One of clear Knowledge who has neither likes nor dislikes.

3. Blessed be the Feet of Him who is all Light. Blessed be the Feet of Him, the true Devotee, who had the Grace of the Lord.

4. Blessed be the Feet of Him the embodiment of Truth, who realised the Truth and rejected all (else). Blessed be the Feet of Him who shows the path of emancipation as it really is.

5. Blessed be the Feet of Him who truly knows but does not show Himself off as a Knower. Blessed be the Feet of Him who teaches the way of highest devotion.

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, April 1972.
6. Blessed be the Feet of Him who removes the fears of those who take refuge in Him. Blessed be the Feet of Him who regards even poison as nectar.

7. Blessed be the Feet of Him, the Supreme. Blessed be the Feet of Him who lets no danger come (to His devotee).

8. Blessed be the Feet of Him who returns good for evil. Blessed be the Feet of the Creator who melts even stony hearts.

9. Blessed be the Feet of Him who does not expect any reward. Blessed be the Feet of Him, the Lord whose speech is like nectar.

10. Blessed be the Feet of Him who teaches "Seek 'Who am I?' and leave the rest." Blessed be the Feet of Him, the Peaceful One, who says that sorrow will go if one becomes Oneself.

11. Blessed be the Feet of the One who gives the knowledge that 'I am not the body which is so dear.' Blessed be the Feet of Him who says 'Throw the burden on the Lord'.

12. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says that the Divine will bear any burdens. Blessed be the Feet of Him who says 'Stick to the Path which is shown'.

13. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says that all is the work of the Lord. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says that the ego and nothing else is the whole trouble.

14. Blessed be the Feet of the One who teaches 'That which rises as the "I" is the mind.' Blessed be the Feet of the One who teaches that the mind is dissolved in the vision of jnana.

15. Blessed be the Feet of the One who instructs 'Do not think anything and be still'. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says 'Keep your mind fixed in the Self'.

16. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says 'Do not slacken in Self-enquiry but continue it till you achieve abidance in the Self'.

17. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says 'All evil that hovers around identification with the body will vanish with Self-enquiry'.

18. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says that bliss will surge up and up as one dives deeper and deeper into the 'I'.

19. Blessed be the Feet of the Lord who instructs 'Offer the wandering mind to the Lord. It is the highest devotion'.

20. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says 'Do not dissociate yourself from the Lord who is within but appears separate and without'.

21. Blessed be the Feet of the One who instructs: 'Stop it if the mind goes after sense objects; this is offering the soul to the Lord'.

22. Blessed be the Feet of the One who teaches 'Quell all thoughts which rise; that is vairagya'.

23. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'Many are the ways to control the mind. The best among them is Self-enquiry'.

24. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'If controlled by other methods it (the
mind) will rise again. This is due to the force of vasanas.

25. Blessed be the Feet of the One who explains: 'By mantra japa the mind will be quiescent. Japa is a means of enquiry'.

26. Blessed be the Feet of the Murti (one with form) who says '(Contemplation on) Form will make the mind one-pointed. Considered well, it is also a way'.

27. Blessed be the Feet of the One who teaches, 'If Prana (breath) is controlled mind is temporarily controlled. Pranayama (breath-control) is also a means'.

28. Blessed be the Feet of the One whose teaching is 'The best in the code (for sadhakas) is moderate eating. (Also) one word spoken leads to a hundred'.

29. Blessed be the Feet of the One who teaches 'Control of mind is the gist of any book (teaching). What book do you need to see yourself?'

30. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'Desire is the play of (material) atoms. Desirelessness is jnana'.

31. Blessed be the Feet of the One who enjoins, 'Get rid of the discrimination between the sexes. Marriage is a way of achieving it'.

32. Blessed be the Feet of the Noble One who explains that giving to others is giving to oneself, if there is the knowledge as to who one is.

33. Blessed be the Feet of the One who stays humble and says 'To humble oneself more and more is good. Avoid contempt towards those who are low'.

34. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'If one wants to overrule (others), others will do the same. If one stays humble, others will also do likewise'.

35. Blessed be the Feet of the One who instructs: 'Don't go back on your word. Do not interfere in others' affairs'.

36. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'It is best to let one raise himself by himself. Grace helps where there is effort'.

37. Blessed be the Feet of the Yogi who says: 'It is dangerous to discard traditional rules of conduct. Try to think and understand their significance'.

38. Blessed be the Feet of the One who teaches 'Regard everything as the Will of the Lord. Considered well the world is only a dream'.

39. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'It is proper for the wife to act in compliance with the husband. She will derive the same peace as the husband acquires'.

40. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'Fix the mind in the Self. That is respecting the Guru's word'.

41. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'Nothing else is expected of you — be rid of the feeling of difference (between the jiva and the Self)'.

42. Blessed be the Feet of the One who says: 'Formal respect is only for the outside world. Where is this consideration when
there is unity between man and wife? (Symbolically the relationship between the master and the disciple though bound by the rule of respect in one sense, is really one of Unity.)

43. Blessed be the Feet of the One who sees merits even in faults. Blessed be the Feet of the jnani who has saved me, possessed of little tapas.

44. Blessed be the Feet of the One who like the Sun makes the hearts of the devotees blossom. Blessed be the Feet of the One who lives in Arunachala.

45. Blessed be the Feet of the One who was born in Holy Tiruchuli. Blessed be the Feet of the One who was born through Grace as son to Sundaram Iyer.

Blessed be, blessed be
The Feet of Lord Ramana,
Blessed be, blessed be
And for ever blessed be!

FROM THE DIARY OF N. N. RAJAN
(7/9/48: 3-45 p.m.)

Bhagavan asked attendant Sivanandam, “You are changing duty at 3-45 p.m. and again at 5-45 p.m. and so on. Is it not?” The attendant replied that this was so. Bhagavan then said, “You all have at least some change, but I am fixed up here throughout the day without any freedom. I am unable to move about freely like you. This is the fate even of Maharajas and other famous people. They have to take medical advice for choosing items of food even while they are normal and healthy. This is the case with me also. I like food made with wheat, but the people here will not allow me to take it. Also, will anyone advise me to eat only rice gruel and pickles and to drink only hot water?” (Bhagavan indicated on many occasions that he preferred to eat rice gruel instead of the food he was normally served.)

A voice in the Hall: “No, no.” T. P. R. added, “No one would like Bhagavan to take this food.”

Bhagavan replied, “Anyone who wants to eat delicious food may eat whatever they want, but why should they compel me to take only some specified items of food? See how it is.”
The Portals of Self-enquiry

By V. Dwarakanath Reddy

TOSSED and tormented by the waves of hope and desire that entice us as sunny ripples but change unknown into vicious breakers and transform the moment of frolic into the hour of despair, some of us somehow regain the tranquil shore, and begin to contemplate the occurrence in order to prevent a recurrence.

Such a one am I, and if such you too be, we will keep company through this page, or else we part here, to go each his way.

Tell me now, my friend that have chosen to stay with me, whether if in this instant a benevolent dispensation grants us the fulfilment of all the hopes earlier withheld, and all the desires earlier denied, our minds will know abiding peace? How long will it be before we are enmeshed again in demand and despair, in hope and fear?

When we see the banality of our method in seeking happiness through satiated desire, while in truth desire fuels further desire, a resentment of the travesty we have made of our lives so far is felt, and the mind withdraws into itself to consider with earnestness and urgency: What is my true nature? In what lies fulfilment? What, indeed, am I?

The enquiry looks critically at the concept I have had of myself, wherein I am this body solely or essentially. I may be accommodative and concede that I am this body with a special capability I recognize as consciousness or awareness or mind or life. With this faculty I am alive (a live body) and without it I am dead (a dead body). The unquestioned implication so far is that the special attribute of mind or life is a function of the body; that is, structured as it is, this conglomerate of insentient flesh, skin, bone, brain and blood, has biochemical capabilities to generate the energy that is experienced by itself as sentiency, or consciousness.

The contradiction between an insentient mass giving rise to sentiency now has to focus attention upon itself, till it is seen beyond further dispute that it cannot be thus. The energy of consciousness must be a self-existent and independent truth; energy is not produced (created) by matter, howsoever structured, but only manifests as a force that acts upon and moves matter. It follows that energy which exists independent of matter, and manifests its properties as a force when related to matter, cannot be destroyed when its association with material vestures is ended.

It further follows then that life in me, understood as the energy that manifests as consciousness or activity in me, cannot be destroyed by the phenomenon called death. My death can only signify that my life-energy (my mind-capability) can no longer manifest in that body, and lacking that support the body has turned into an insentient
corpse. When the flow of electrical energy has been switched off, the moving (living) fan has become the still (dead) fan. But did electricity die?

This moves us to a perception of the subtler truth of oneself as the energy that abides in or constitutes one's mind, which is the totality, or else the essence, of its experiences, feelings, responses, memories. My mind is my own (as yours is yours) with its circumference of which I (my I-ness) am the centre, a circle that may expand or contract, but always a limited separate entity. So it seems.

Till again the enquiry, being earnest and urgent, re-examines the early acceptance of a life-time's habit, and arrives at the question, "What can limit consciousness? Make of it a fragmented entity?" My mind has to answer this question, and obviously any answer can only give verbal shape to what the mind perceives, and whatever is perceived is only a mode of consciousness, a thought within the mind. So it becomes akin to drawing a circle upon the sea with water to demarcate a small area of the sea! The mind can conceive of nothing that can be its container, for whatever is conceived is already its content!

The prompting of a totally new dimension to one's being (reality) is felt within the mind that has turned its gaze upon itself. I-ness is not circumscribed, it cannot be. When the frontiers of my mind are seen to be non-existent, its unbroken identity with the Total-Mind, the Total-Consciousness is sensed. If this body of mine was the limited equipment with which my limited mind identified, in the expanded reality of the total mind it is obvious that the whole universe constitutes its body-equipment.

Then there is in truth a unitary consciousness, expressing through a unitary equipment (universe), and the whole phenomenon is a unitary movement.

And you my friend, still by my side in shared discovery, are to me not other than me, as in another dream where I was the dreamer and you were my friend in the dream, we were both inherent in one dream-movement that arose in one dream-consciousness of one ME. In the restored reality of myself as the waking-I when the dream had ended, there was only one architect, one experiencer of the dream, he that could say: I dreamt, I was there, you were there, but in truth nothing was there. It seemed I was that one, but I am this one, and have never been other than this one. Do you see, my friend, that you cannot in the morning assert your presence in my dream of last night? And that therefore there is only one I into which all the 'me' and 'you' and 'they' and 'it' must resolve?

To have sensed that as the ultimate Truth of oneself is to have arrived at the portals of Self-realization. It is the entrance through the arch upon which are inscribed the immortal words with which Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi launches the earnest seeker upon the final voyage of delight and discovery:

WHO AM I?
The Mystic Poetry of William Blake

By Alan Jacobs

I rest not from the great task
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the
Immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the worlds of
Thought, into Eternity
Ever expanding in the bosom of God, the
Human Imagination.

From the standpoint of our study of English mystical poetry, one of the most important figures to emerge is William Blake (1757-1827). 'London Blake' is universally acknowledged as a great mystic, prophet, poet and artist. His powerful drawings, full of the spirit of awe and astonishment, continue to inspire many an artist. His Prophetic Books are well springs of psychological revelation, worthy of sustained study. His eminent biographer Peter Ackroyd writes of one of the greatest Londoners who have ever lived, "His own Bardic strength was linked to the visionary wisdom of London."

The primary influence on Blake's mature thought was the noted Swedish mystic and visionary, Emanuel Swedenborg (1668-1772). Swedenborg, a scientist and mining engineer, was determined to seek a comprehensive explanation of the universe. During the course of his enquiry, he experienced many visions. It is stated that a systematic theosophical system was revealed to him. Briefly, there is an Almighty God from whom, as infinite love and wisdom, emanate the worlds of nature and spirit. The peak of Creation is the approximation of Man to God. During his long and prolific life as a writer, he left over twenty large volumes, of which Arcania Celestia (Heavenly Secrets) written between 1749-56 has been seminal. Swedenborg's followers organised themselves into a 'New Church' which still prospers in Sweden, America, and through the handsome London premises of the Swedenborg Society in Bloomsbury Way. According to Blake's Victorian biographer William Allingham, there is a possibility that the young engraver's apprentice, William Blake, may have walked beside, or met Swedenborg (who was then eightyfour) on his last visit to London, as they were both living close at hand.

Swedenborg first visited London when he was twentyone, in order to improve his knowledge of mathematics and history, to study Newton's work and meet the

Newtonian circle. He lived in London for two years, and while studying astronomy at Greenwich, was introduced to Halley after whom the Comet was named. Swedenborg made a second visit to the City in 1769, as part of a subsequent European tour to meet more of the important scientists and natural philosophers of the day. On his third visit to London, he died, and was interred in the Swedish Church near the Tower of London. In 1909, his remains were transferred to Sweden, and with great honours, placed in Uppsala Cathedral.

William Blake possessed and annotated a copy of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*. His friend John Flaxman the artist, who illustrated Dante's *Divine Comedy*, introduced the young Blake to a General Conference of Swedenborg's New Jerusalem Church in 1789. He also had copies of the Master's *Divine Love, Divine Wisdom* and *Divine Providence*. Here are examples of Swedenborg's 'Correspondences', his term for psychological-spiritual archetype images from the visible universe, which correspond to inner realities:

The visible universe is nothing else than a theatre, Representative of the Lord's kingdom.  
Every created thing is an image of God in a mirror.  
Man is both a heaven and an earth in microcosm.  

All scholars agree that Blake's *Prophetic Books* bear the influence of Swedenborg. However, soon after the Conference in 1789, he came across the works of the German mystic Jacob Boehme, and the alchemic physician Paracelsus. He moved away from Swedenborg to their wisdom, which touched him personally, from a purer spring of revelation.

Jacob Behmen or Boehme (1575-1624) was a shoemaker. It is stated that in the year 1600, a ray of the Sun reflected from a metal disc, filled him with the light of God, and opened to him the mysteries of the universe. Two further revelations dictated to him his book *Aurora*. After suffering Church persecution for his heterodox ideas, he died in Gorlitz. Sir Isaac Newton, founder of classical physics, studied his books deeply and is said to have found in them his theory of gravi-
tation. Boehme's English followers became Quakers under the influence of William Law; Blake's study of him, after Swedenborg, was profoundly formative in his art and poetry.

Boehme wrote some thirty works in all. In his treatise *Concerning the Eternal Signature and Heavenly Joy; Why all things were brought into Evil and Good* he wrote as an opening statement:

"The creation of the whole Creation is nothing else but a manifestation of the all-essential, unsearchable God.

---

1 *Arcanum Coelestia.*  
2 *Divine Love and Wisdom.*  
3 *Heaven and Hell.*
"All whatever he is in his eternal unbeginning generation and dominion of that, is also the creation, but not in omnipotence and power, but like an apple which grows upon the tree, which is not the tree itself, but grows from the power of the tree.

"Even so, all things are sprung forth out of the divine desire, and created into essence, where in the beginning there was no such essence present, but only that same mystery of the eternal generation, in which there has been an eternal perfection."

William Blake was born in Broad Street, Carnaby Market, and at an early age was apprenticed to an engraver. His early inclinations were principally artistic ones. His master, Basire, sent him to make drawings inside Westminster Abbey. Meticulously, the young Blake sketched all of its magnificent Gothic details. These visits enshrine his earliest and most sacred recollections, and are profoundly etched into this most impressionable soul.

Subsequently, Blake earned his livelihood as an illustrator and engraver. He never left London except for a brief stay at Felpham where he had visions during — as Ackroyd says — "one of those many spiritual epiphanies in which the meaning of life was vouchsafed to him." Most of his life was spent in the City, self-publishing and illustrating in colour his Prophetic Books. Through these writings a vision was perceived, which he translated into a personal mythology, coin­ing his own names for archetypal cosmic forces. These books included Visions of the Daughters of Albion, America — a Prophecy, Urizen, Europe — a Prophecy and the books of Los, Valla, Milton and Jerusalem. He is popularly known for his Songs of Innocence and Experience which includes the following memorable lines:

Tiger, Tiger, burning bright,
In the Forests of the Night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

It is however, his last great and beautifully hand coloured and illustrated book Jerusalem which interests us the most. Deep in its cryptic pages is found the awe-inspiring vision of a renewed London. Kathleen Raine, the distinguished poetess and a foremost Blake scholar, says, "Blake is the supreme poet of the City." In her paper read to her Temenos Academy, of which Prince Charles is patron, she wrote, "Beneath the appearance of day to day London, William Blake discovers a London more real than the London visible to bodily eyes." As Blake himself wrote:

... I heard in Lambeth's shade,
In Felpham I saw and heard Visions of Albion,
I write in South Molton Street what I both see and hear
In regions of humanity, in London's opening streets ...

Kathleen Raine sees in him the true prophet of the New Age. His aim was to waken Albion and free her people from their inner enslavement. He saw London as an emblematic City, corresponding to the realities hidden in the human psyche, and its potential to transform to a new Jerusalem. Blake, like us all, saw the dark side of the...
city. There is always a shadow side; his poem *London* is a sad lament:

**London**

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mindforg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new born Infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

Every City has its horrors of crime, violence, slums, poverty, corruption and injustice. But Blake perceived these perversions of natural energies to be capable of an inner transformation, once the understanding was present in enough individuals. He saw within her 'secret chambers . . . in the houses of Londoners' — the 'golden builders' whereby the City would eventually undergo a profound change. Raine writes, "Blake was no Utopian idealist nor political campaigner. The foundations of the City are not within the domain of politicians and institutions, but within ourselves; and it is there that the labours of building Jerusalem must begin."

Blake saw London as a mirror of Jerusalem, with her Trojan affinities from Brutus and Aeneas which he fully accepted. He envisaged the *Eternal London*, like Jerusalem, as a City surrounded by seven sacred hills. These included Barrow, Primrose, Parliament, Highgate, Penton, Ludgate and Tot. Westminster's Tot Hill was dug away in the nineteenth century for building purposes. Barrow was levelled when the railway steamed, roaring, into the City. The beautiful River Fleet flowed through those sacred hills, the Vale Royal. In his vision, Albion itself was the peak of Atlantean mountains which escaped the deluge. The Druids were Atlanteans who fled to the hilltops and survived. He knew Joseph of Arimathea had brought the Holy Grail to Albion; he felt that Christ, the holy lamb of God, had truly walked upon England's green and pleasant land.

It is interesting that the magnificent New British Library also housed in King's Cross, has in its Piazza a huge statue by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, of Isaac Newton, based on the famous water colour by Blake in the Tate Gallery. Newton is seated on a rock, and with his compass-dividers he circumscribes the universe. In the poem *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake wrote, "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is — Infinite."

This spiritual genius lived in London almost all his life toiling on his *Prophetic Books* to point the way to man's spiritual regeneration. This he felt could best be achieved through the full comprehension of the vision which he had experienced in this City. He commu-
nicated it through superb illustrations to a sublime poetry. Although it may seem superficially obscure to one not familiar with it, once the key to his mythology is unlocked — the significance of his chosen Names — a world of divine inspiration unveils.

In his prophetic book *Jerusalem*, he saw in London a golden quatrain which points to King's Cross, the Brill of Stukeley as being central to the new Jerusalem. He writes:

The fields from Islington to Marylebone,
To Primrose Hill and St John's Wood
Were builded over with pillars of gold
And there Jerusalem's pillars stood.

Aidan Dunn in his footnotes to his epic poem *The Vale Royal*, believes that these four lines demarcate a geographical rectangle with the Euston Road to the South forming its base. The line from Marylebone to Primrose Hill is its Western side. St Pancras Old Church, founded by St Augustine himself but sadly neglected, lies at the centre of the rectangle. I attended a Sunday morning Eucharist in this church, now surrounded by Council Flats. In spite of its ruthless Victorian renovation and distressed exterior, the obvious devotion of a small band of dedicated worshippers keeps the primeval flame alive even to this day.

To analyse and try to interpret all the inner meanings and symbolic mythology of *Jerusalem* with its magnificent illustrations and text, hand written by Blake, would be a book in itself and beyond our scope. Suffice it to say that the new London would be fourfold, inhabiting the regions of the sense, feelings, reason and vision. As Peter Ackroyd brilliantly affirms:

Jesus is the vision of immensity seen in terms of a Great City; but this place is also the Incarnation. It is the divine Humanity that exists within each created being. It is the idealised society, also, and a vivid representation of that moment of creation within the lark's song. It is a fallen London. It is Jerusalem.

Blake strongly indicted the Industrial Revolution. He foresaw that the exploitation of the worker in oppressive conditions would be injurious to mind, body and spirit. He also opposed the mechanical interpretation of Newton's physical universe, as did Goethe. He would no doubt have been happier with the Uncertainty Principle of the new quantum physics.

Here are some selections of his poetry from the *Element Book of Mystical Verse* which illustrate his greatness as a Mystical Poet.

The simplicity of this poem needs no introduction.

**THE DIVINE IMAGE**

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

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.
For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.
Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.
And all must love the human form,

In Heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.
Thus we see the vision of a great mystical poet. Need more be said?

THE SWAN

By Noona Osborne

1.
In the never ending sunlight of my soul,
In the never ending love that’s always me,
There is a yearning that I cannot hide my Lord,
In the never ending thirst to find my tears;
But I would cry with a peace that is yours,
And in my sadness, let the river flow —
And crack my frozen heart,
and I can find that
Touch of love in nothing but a bird
O Lord,
O Lord, in the never ending sadness —
Of that light, will I but find your smile? —
Will I but see — that those have seen, O Lord
My Lord!

2.
In the zone of half light there is sadness,
In the silent time the tears flowed and
Gone to gentle rest and your gentleness
Was in you; were you only touched by the dawn??
It took you to the peace — in your heart??
You never waked to see the golden fi’ —
re in the sky, do you ask me — who am I?
Did you see the sunlight on the mountain
Light the light?
He is only he who sees the light
Transcending sadness, that’s who he is . . . . . . .
Bird of beauty, bird of power . . . .
surrender were the key notes of his bond with his sadguru’. This epitomises the essential qualities of a true sādhaka. A very instructive and valuable Chapter 7 carries a second section consisting of select extracts from Some Moments With The Master reviewed earlier (The MP, Dec ‘96).

The language is simple and clear and the message reaches the reader. The glossary and bibliography are useful additions. On the whole an excellent book for spiritual aspirants.

— Prof. Leela Subramoni

VEDANTIC GNOSIS FOR BLESSEDNESS: by Fr. Anthony Elenjimittam. Aquinas Publications. Institute for Religious Understanding, Sadhana Hall, Mount Mary, Bandra (W), Mumbai 400050. Pp. 92, Rs.?

This clear concise and spirited little book, written from the heart, is a guidebook for the pilgrimage of the soul. “Happiness, my son, is the blossomed flower and ripened fruit of your attuning yourself with the infinite that is already within you”. Fr Anthony tells us “but how to reach thither? Well hold my hand my daughter and I will safely row you across the ocean of cosmic illusion, Maya, and then reach you to the shoreless horizons of God, your true Self, the Real behind the appearance”.

And row you he does, in nine short chapters, leading you through an exposition of the mental states, the meaning of birth, human life and death, the significance of the soul or life principle, how to perceive, transcend the passions, instincts, and emotions, on to emancipation (“religion at its best is liberation, inner freedom from within”), and finally he brings you to “the island of peace and joy”, the ecstasy of transcending the world to the One without second, where he leaves you in “your true Home which is AUM, Self, the Lord of the Universe seated in your hearts”.

Fr. Anthony preaches no religion, favours no path, takes no sides. He writes as one who has already glimpsed those “shoreless horizons” as one who is beyond exclusivist religion, liturgy, scripture, pomp and dead ritual. Indeed he says that all ceremony, all study can never show the Truth in themselves but are only aids to guide you to the “heart enrapturing vision”.

This little book, one of at least 15 that Fr. Anthony authored, is as much a pleasure to read as I’m sure the author is to meet, and if he is still with us on this material plane, such a visit might be well worth while.

— Lindsay Keremidschieff


The present book is the outcome of a spiritual dialogue between Saivas and Christians and comprises a collection of papers presented at a seminar organised by Abhishiktānanda Society.

The word ‘mysticism’, derived from the Greek word ‘myco’, means healing. It aims at restoring original unity, which is temporarily broken or obscured. Mysticism can heal the wounds of differences among human beings, man and nature, man and the ultimate reality. The mystic has the inner freedom to transcend the limitations of tradition.

When the systems are compared, their differences are acknowledged as well an openness for unity. The difference lies only in approach.

Rahasyavāda is the Indian equivalent of the term ‘mysticism’. There are also words such as ātma sākāḥtākara, anubhava, pratyabhijñā and others.

The principal motivation of the mystic to speak about the reality is to enlighten his disciples. Theirs is an expression in words of what is really beyond words. The paradox between silence and speech or writing is the topic of mysticism.

Mysticism is not an extreme emotional or dry intellectual conviction. The essence of experience is God-realisation, the attainment of one’s own true nature. This re-cognition is called pratyabhijñā. It is an ultimate state of being which is our own. This, Kashmir Saivism calls vismaya (wonder, wonder or surprise).

The first article by Alois M. Haas clarifies the concept of mysticism. Raimondo Panikkar selects a few of Christ’s mahāvākyās and interprets them.

Swāmī Nityānandaśīqi deals with the mysticism of Saiva Siddhānta. He also provides an insight into its sanyāsa tradition. When the author asked Sadguru Gnānānanda about his position on reality, the sage replied “The answer is within you. Seek it in the depths of your being. Devote yourself to dhyāna meditation beyond all forms and the solution will be given to you”. The article is full of clarity. The author finishes with the English translation of a few verses from Tayumanavar’s Ānanda Kalippu.

Christ’s mysticism is analysed under three heads: Eva me suttam, itipasỹdī and Sat purusha.

The book under review is an account of the life and teachings of Sufi Qalander Hazrat Sai Qutab Ali Shah, his spiritual successors and select disciples. Mysticism has always fascinated mankind. The more recent the events relating to saints, the greater is the awe. The Sufi saints discussed in this book belong to the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Anonymity and humility have hidden these great saints and mystics from the public. The author had rendered signal service in bringing out a book about these great spiritual masters relatively unknown to the modern generation.

An important aspect of the book is the true perspective in which Sufism is viewed. Far from being an exclusive Islamic creed, Sufism is synonymous with Advaita. It preaches non-duality and Divine love, i.e. ishq-ruqti or prema bhakti. The teachings of the Sufi saint Sai Qutab Ali Shah is universal in its application. As the author summarises, “One has to realize the Self, Haq, Alla or Truth. One must arise and awake in the Absolute, the ego must be annihilated and the goal cannot be attained unless one surrenders one’s head. This can be done only when one abandons the self, or gives up false identification with the illusory body and realises that he is Haq, the Truth, the Universal Being” (p.20).

The saints included in the books are Sai Qutab Ali Shah (1811 - 1910), his son Hazrat Sai Roshan Ali Shah (1852 - 1932), his grandson Sai Hadi Baksh (1879 - 1942); Bhai Gobindram Sahib (1886 - 1921), and Sai (Dr.) Rochaldas Sahib (1879 - 1957) the disciples of Sai Qutab Ali Shah; and Sai (Dr.) R. M. Hari (1912 - 1980). The author has devoted a chapter to each of the saints and given detailed quotations from their works especially the lyrics of Sai Qutab Shah, Sai Roshan Ali Shah and Hazrat Sai Hadi Baksh. In these days of communal clashes and religious fanaticism this book comes as an eye opener. Three great Hindu saints: Sai Dr. Rochaldas Sahib, Bhai Gobindram Sahib and Dewan Jiwatram Matai were the disciples of Sai Qutab Ali Shah. The author refers to an incident to prove his point. When two young Hindu men wanted to convert to Islam the Revered Master, Sai Qutab Ali Shah told them, “There is divine purpose in what the Lord does. If He has granted you birth in Hindu religion, your welfare lies in it. Had He wished otherwise He would have granted you birth in a Muslim family, but He did not. If you act contrary to Divine Will, it will be an act of disobedience to Him. So you must remain firm in your religion” (p.42). All the saints discussed in this book were above religious barriers and distinctions.

The book brings out very clearly the spiritual message of the masters. The emphasis is on annihilation of ego, the little self and total absorption in the universal Self, the realization of the state of Oneness or non-duality. In the words of Hazrat Sai Hadi Baksh (Miskeen),

“I found the secret within,
And reflected on the Beloved
I realized within the self, O Miskeen,
He has assumed all the forms”. (p.109)

The most interesting chapters are chapters 7 and 8 dealing with the lives of Sai Dr. Rochaldas Sahib and Dada Sai Dr. R. M. Han for they belong to the very recent times. As the author says, “Profound devotion, total obedience and self-
Jesus is described as an individual undeniable, a generic man, an abstract knot in a net of relationships, the door into the intimacy of being.

Articles by Meister Eckhart, B.N. Pandit, Gispert-Sauch and Jānkhāt Kaul are also found in the book. The book aids understanding of Kashmir Saivism, Saiva Siddhānta and Christianity from the point of view of mysticism.

— Dr. T.N. Pranatharthi Haran


Writing from the heart and expressing a deep rooted love for Hinduism, Védic and Védāntic teachings, David Frawley traces his personal odyssey of spiritual searching. He shares his ups and downs, various encounters with teachers and teachings, and experiences which brought him to this ancient and timeless knowledge and religion. He is very open in his retelling of his personal search, and this honesty provides an insight for other seekers.

He also presents the historic background of Hinduism. He makes a passionate appeal to Hindus and non-Hindus to appreciate the depth of these Védic traditions and teachings. He sees the beauty of the inter-twining of culture and religion, living the belief, as one of Hinduism’s great strengths. He provides a well researched and well founded insight into the political climate surrounding Hinduism today. With an impassioned appeal to other religions to leave Hinduism alone, he describes how it has been systematically subjected to an insidious denigration, by them and now, from within India’s own intelligentsia. This is quite an eye opener, as according to Frawley many Westerners and Indians are quite blithely unaware of this outside attempt to undermine and obliterate this traditional Indian philosophy and way of “being” in the world.

A very engaging read, informative, articulate, and inspired. Emerging from his obvious love for Hinduism and its culture, he takes the reader along on his quest and discovery from beginning stages, to becoming a Hindu and now a defender of the teachings and sacred traditions.

— Dorothy Tanous


The term Hinduism is used as a facile connotation for what is most appropriately described as Sanātana Dharma or Eternal Code of Righteous Conduct. Sanātana Dharma is not based on the edicts of any single person, angel or God but is an amalgam of different cultural, metaphysical and traditional beliefs and values that have not only survived the worst of challenges but also flourished, flowered, and fruited over centuries. As so well explained in David Frawley’s twenty page Foreword, Hinduism is not an iron clad conversion based, aggressive and monotheistic religion, but a broad based way of life leading by stages to Self or God Realisation.

Various essays and reviews on diverse aspects of Hinduism, some of which have remained unpublished so far, are included in this book. There are eight chapters. The first of these presents a summary of the basic tenets of Sanātana Dharma. Cultural self-alienation, abetted by a passive and indifferent attitude to the onslaughts of external and unfriendly forces, poses a real threat to Hinduism as apprehended by the author in the second chapter. In chapters 3 and 5, Buddhism is compared with Hinduism, with an analysis of Aldous Huxley’s ideas on the subject. The time-honoured concepts of Hinduism and Buddhism, such as karma, reincarnation, yoga, meditation, and consciousness are now widely accepted in the West and were always admired by its famous Indologists, philosophers and scholars. India and Europe, a book published in German in 1981 and later translated into English and published in the USA in 1988 and in India in 1990, is reviewed in Chapter 4. It shows how Christian Europe predated Greek and other ancient cultures in that region and then gradually spread it’s deadly tentacles to Asia. The Hindu approach to education, following the guru-shishya tradition, is a holistic and integrated one rooted in austerity, faith, humility and simplicity. In contrast, many of the Western educational institutions have now become a sanctuary for all kinds of excesses, drinking, drugs, promiscuity, etc. in the garb of freedom. This is well brought out in Chapters 6 and 7. The cultural and intellectual ties between Greece and India are discussed in the last chapter. The book closes with a general index.

This is a thought provoking and informative compilation that should take a prominent place in every public library and private collection.

— Dr. T. Sankaran
Mahābhārata is not a mere story. It is a part of this country’s collective consciousness. It is always contemporaneous. Vyāsa himself declares it to be not a mere narrative akhyāna, but a sacred treatise, dealing with Artha, harma and Mōksha. He summarises the quintessence of his teaching in this verse.

\[
\text{urdhva bāhurviraumyēshah} \\
\text{na ca kasci smōti mē} \\
\text{dhammādarhasca kāmasca} \\
\text{sa kimartham na sēvyate}
\]

“I am shouting at the top of my voice with up raised arms! It is only by way of Dharma that one can achieve Artha as well as Kama. But, alas, no one listens to me. Why don’t you pursue Dharma whole-heartedly?

Subhash Anand’s Story as Theology purports to be a study of five episodes from the Mahābhārata, interpreting them in contemporaneous idiom. According to the author, the first story of churning of the ocean symbolises our fundamental quest for happiness or amritatva, life beyond death. Of all the five episodes, this is the story which has been dealt with extensively, in its various facets. For instance, the author quotes SA Dange’s opinion that the story deals with the sacrificial ritual of soma. But expressions cited may be only metaphysical, not real, especially in view of the fact that by the time Mahābhārata came to be written, the soma ritual is almost forgotten.

The author also feels that the story may also refer to the churning of fire using the two fire sticks, arani. He also discusses other possibilities, derived from various meanings of the word amrita, nectar, ghee, soma, fire etc. The esoteric message that the author derives from this churning episode of amrita manthana is: Be committed to Rta and Dharma. Do not succumb to temptation (mōhini). Then you will attain immortality. There is a ring of Buddhist wisdom here.

The story of Yayāti and Kaca has also been dealt with in its entirety. While Kaca symbolises wisdom and discernment, Yayāti mistakes transient pleasure for real happiness leading to eternal bondage. While Yayāti episode is found in pre-epic texts, Kaca story is specific to Mahābhārata. Scholars like Dange opine that while the Kaca episode has reference to upanayanam rites of swallowing and disgorging, Yayāti episode signifies pratīlōma marriage. This appears somewhat far-fetched. The author compares the story of Kaca to that of the Upanishadatic Nācikētas, and with a long list of similarities tries to establish Kaca’s is the story of a disciple in search of wisdom. Both were tempted in different ways, but spurned the offer in preference for eternal Wisdom. While the statement based on Oldenberg, that the story of temptation of Buddha is inspired by the story of Nācikētas (and probably Kaca) has been simply stated without any concrete evidence or analysis, the author in the same breath, makes a specious comparison between the story of Kaca and Dēvayāni and of the primordial twins Yama and Yami. While it makes interesting reading, logic does not seem to be strong here.

The subsequent metaphysical statement of Dēvayāni symbolising the path of good sṛēya, stands to reason. The author succinctly brings out the main message that “you cannot overcome craving by giving in to it”.

The author starts the controversial story of Khāndavadahana or burning of Khāndava forest, with almost Kosambiesque interpretation, this episode as symbolising colonial expansion. But he follows it up with the beautiful comparison between ecology and women. In a society where ecology is not preserved, women will not be respected. In the Kuru land, the Khāndava forest is destroyed. The same clan has also attempted to disrobe Draupadi.

This is followed by the story of Āstika, Sāranga bird and Takshaka. The author projects Āstika as an anti thesis of Agni. With Takshaka, the root-word derived from Takeha, means continuous creation-process, while Āstika, the word “sat” being the root-word, signifies the protective nature which supports the creative process. The story signifies the shift of emphasis from theocentric to anthropocentric approach.

The next two episodes that of Sāvitrī and Bali have been dealt with in a more brief pattern. The author explains that Sāvitrī, symbolises wisdom, the word being derived from the Rig Vedic supreme god savitr, who signifies brilliance. Ultimately it is Sāvitrī’s wisdom, not her love that helps her to triumph over death. Sāvitrī represents the cosmic order the symbiotic relationship between all its elements.
The last story is that of Bali. The author elaborately deals with the various legends of Bali, the symbol of renunciation. Bali is the great teacher. Here Indra, (Vasava) is not presented as an enemy of Bali, but as his obedient disciple, showering encomiums on him. Without any clinching evidence, the author describes the story of Bali in Mahabharata as symbolising the beginning of non-Vedic form of worship.

There are certain curious unsubstantiated statements by the author especially in the last chapter, like where he says that the Bhagavat Gīta is the brāhmanic reorientation of the dialogue between Bali and Vasava. Similarly the comparison of Vāmana to sunset is also somewhat far fetched. There is a tendency to relate everything to sunrise and sunset. Similarly his announcement that the institution of fourfold caste-system arose after the fall of Bali lacks proof. Despite all this the book is a good analysis and makes interesting reading.

— S. Rammohan

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF H.H. Sri CHANDRASEKHARA BHARATHI: by Prof. N. Nanjunda Sastry. 1999. Pub: Lalitha Prakashana, 107/1 2nd Main Road, Mount Joy extension, Hanumanthanagar, Bangalore 560019 India. pp. 198; Rs. 120.

The Dakshināmmaya Sāradā Pitham of Sringeri, the foremost among the four Pithams established by Ādi Sankara has been adorned by great tapasvin, and mahāyogins from Śrī Surāvārāchārya to the present head, Śri Bhāratītīthā Swami. It is also to the greatness of Sringeri that the Pitham has an unbroken succession of āchāryās.

This book is a very sincere and dedicated work of Prof. Sāstry on the life of H.H. Śri Chandrasēkhara Bhārati, the 34th āchārya of the Sāradā Pitham and a great brahmajñāni of our times.

Prof. Sāstry’s prolific pen has detailed in 24 chapters the greatness of Sringeri, the illustrious and pious family background of the āchārya, his birth and boyhood, his vairāgya even then, his yogic powers and his teachings. Even a cursory reading of this book will make one devoted to this Great Sage of our times and will create an intense desire to go to Sringeri.

Prof. Sāstry’s sraddhā and Guru bhakti are well revealed in this work. Though several books have been written on this Sage of Sringeri by renowned men like R. Krishnaswāmy Iyer (Sw. Gnanananda Bharati), S.K. Rāmachandra Rao, and Lakshminarasimha Sāstry, this book by Prof. N. Nanjunda Sāstry is a valuable addition.

— N.S. Krishnan

UNCONDITIONALLY FREE: An Introduction to the Life and Work of J. Krishnamurti (1895-1986), prepared by the Krishnamurti Foundations of America, Canada, India, Latin America, the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust at the Worldwide. 1995 Krishnamurti Centenary. Pp. 54, price not mentioned.

Admittedly there must be a place in the scheme of things for the digest, the capsule-brochure and the instant monograph. You will be told the age demands it. Publishers and others live by it. And all these attempts to stroke the egos of the slothful make for a large, if gloomy market. Gloomy because it persists in the illusion that a part can play the part of the whole. But truth is not divisible and the Life or Work of no truth-seeker is in a fractal framed. Unconditionally Free: an introduction to the Life and Work of J. Krishnamūrti (1895-1986) is yet another foray at instant packaging.

It is only because the provenance and genesis does matter in such cases, that the reader is introduced to the biographical details of J. Krishnamūrti’s life on alternate, italicised pages, interleaved with selections from his talks, in Roman type. The selections are skimpy and the biographical details skim the surface. One wonders if this all too modest an offering will interest the uninitiated to look further —while being of little or no value to the initiated adept.

In monographs and thumbnail notices such as this it is not worth quarrelling about principles on exclusion and inclusion. Lastly, a word about the production. From the frontispiece to the last page, it is error-free and that itself is saying something in our age when time is in such short supply that digests and abridgements are accepted as necessary evils.

— A.S. Srinivāsan


This book is a collection of dialogues between a modern spiritual teacher, Francis Lucille, and
some enquirers. The dialogues reveal the nature of the teacher who obviously speaks from experience and has attained a high degree of spiritual understanding. The statements match the ones made by some of the highest teachers of modern times such as Sri Ramana Maharshi and Jiddu Krishnamurti. The experience of the advaitic nature of truth and the relentless pursuit of the question “Who am I?”, also advocated by Sri Ramana Maharshi, are the main threads running through all the dialogues. The statements of the teacher obviously come from direct experience and not just from the mind—the clarity and consistency of the comments are a revelation of this.

The dialogues cover a wide range of topics such as the (attributeless) nature of the Absolute, the characteristics of the aspirant, the issues of free will, love, art, spiritual practice, and a whole range of ideas that are of interest to humanity in general and the spiritual aspirant in particular. A picture of the totality of all this in the context of spiritual seeking emerges.

Many statements are in fact reminiscent of Sri Ramana Maharshi’s remarks. For instance, Francis Lucille says, “Intuitive intelligence...is at the heart of all scientific discoveries and great works of art. Its source is the supreme intelligence of timeless awareness” (p. 14). Also, “Real art comes from the ultimate, from a vision, from the spirit, as Beethoven would say, from God, as Bach would say” (p. 83).

One recalls Sri Bhagavan’s remark, that the great musicians composed music of eternal value after realisation. Similarly, the response, “Who is there to go through this reincarnation process?” to the question, “How can I escape from the endless circle of birth and death?” (p. 76) is precisely the kind that Ramana Maharshi himself would give.

There are, in all, fourteen chapters in the book but the rationale of the chapter division is not immediately apparent. The initial pages list the questions in each chapter. The useful part of the book is the index, through which one may select the topics of one’s interest.

A final judgement however, cannot be passed on the ‘truths’ of the book by an unenlightened person (even if, as the teachers claim, there is no such a one as an unenlightened person), except to say that it does appeal to the heart and the mind, and much of the content of the book rings true. For a seeker, the appeal to the rational mind is important and this is satisfied in the book. This is a useful book for seekers who are bound to require clarifications on various aspects of spiritual life and life in general as they pursue their spiritual practices.

— P.Sailaja


Tony Parsons says he became enlightened as he was taking a walk in the park a few years ago. His description of this event and the experience it precipitated were recorded in The Open Secret, first published in 1995. Since then he has been sharing his views and perceptions in various spiritual forums. And what are these views? Tony Parsons belongs to that group of modern spiritual teachers who say that there is absolutely nothing you can do to attain or discover enlightenment because there is no ‘you’ who is there in the first place. Though he does teach a kind of self-enquiry that will be familiar to devotees of Ramana Maharshi, and though he does encourage a kind of thoughtless witnessing, he is uncompromising in his adherence to his basic premise that all spiritual practice is pointless. He doesn’t believe that gurus can help either, and he certainly doesn’t accept that there is any spiritually beneficial transmission from guru to disciple.

People come to him wanting to change for the better, wanting some route to enlightenment. Tony Parsons tell them all that seeking enlightenment actually prevents one from experiencing it ‘as it is’. On one level it is all a little depressing, rather like pulling up the ladder once one has climbed it oneself. However, Tony Parsons is no nihilist iconoclast in the mould of U. G. Krishnamurti. He does believe that enlightenment is accessible to anyone who can somehow step back from the mind, or step out of it completely. He simply refuses to give any method or practice.

Tony Parsons’ position was summarised by Bhagavân in his benedictory verse to Ulladu Nāṟṟapu: ‘Since reality exists in the Heart, devoid of thought, how can one meditate upon that reality whose name is “Heart”. Abiding in the Heart as it is alone is meditation.’ Bhagavân had alternative strategies for those who could not follow this advice, but Tony Parsons seems to have none.

The book is well edited and Tony Parsons explains very clearly why the mind can’t eliminate itself or solve any of its apparent problems, but his basic premise – there’s nothing you can do
and nothing I can do to bring about your enlightenment — may leave most readers frustrated.

— David Godman


This book purports to assist a person to astral travel, where and when the reader likes. It is written in a charming, simple manner which belies the deceptive nature of what the authors are teaching. They make the whole idea and application of the mechanics of astral travel appear to be within the reach of everyone. The tone of the book disarms the reader but the underlying purpose and notion of an easy, trouble free travel in the astral is misleading. Any book on the occult has to be treated with caution, not because the elements in the book are wrong, quite the contrary, but because we can easily be sucked into a world view and attitude which distracts us from the true purpose of why we are here in this realm.

On some other yôgic path such astral travels and dreams may be valid as a therapy. On the path of Jnána yoga there is no necessity for the deliberate exploration of the subtle realms though at times they do impinge on our consciousness but they are not given unnecessary weight.

The authors give the concept of astral travel a “feel good” notion not unlike attendance at a family movie. It can be, however, the mind in all it’s infinite variation has surprises and shocks which the uninitiated should be wary of if they attempt this occult practice. We can have extreme difficulties in the identification we have with the physical body. If there is a purpose in it and it appears that way then we need to recognise first principles before adventuring into the astral realm. If we do not know who we are, would we seek elsewhere for recognition, understanding and resolution? I think not. Bhagavan said that the only difference between a dream (which is an essential element of the astral plane) and this physical consciousness is that as the waking state, it is experienced as longer due to the thread of memory. Both are beset with false identification.

— Peter Picglemann


During his life-time Joseph Campbell was recognised as the authority about the myths of the many peoples throughout the world. He carried his scholarship lightly and by the very depth at his command like any genuine expert, could simplify his enormous range of knowledge and make it accessible to the general reader.

This book is a collation of dozen talks he gave at The Cooper Union Forum in New York between 1958 and 1971. The talks have a freshness and lightness that has carried well over the years till now, which is a sign of their enduring validity and worth.

The talks range from the dialogue or lack of it between East and West, Zen, the mythology of love, the mythology of war and peace, oriental art etc. A glance at the reference notes at the conclusion is an astonishing wide sweep of world literature which demonstrates the erudition so effortlessly at his disposal. What strikes me in reading this book is the sense of humanity and lively good sense which gently pervades his lectures.

The one reservation I have concerning these stimulating talks is that their basis is historical, literary and psychological, particularly of the Jungian school. These talks for all their breadth should be taken as providing a rich perspective and opening to the possibilities of a humanity in search of meaning. But they are broad maps only and should not be construed as a metaphysics leading to a true understanding of oneself in the scheme of things. The ease of explanation is not a substitute for the task of right living.

— Peter Picglemann


In the foreword of this book Ajahn Sucitto expresses hope that the reader likes the book and states “we probably won’t unless we feel like listening to it the way we would listen to rain, now pattering, now beating on our window on a dark and blustery night”. Reading this book is very much like experiencing the rain in the hot parched summer.

Amaro Bhikkhu begins by describing the experience of a long tudong walk between the Chithurst monastery in Sussex and the bash monastery at Harnham in Northumberland, with a friend. It is easy for the reader to experience the walk with them, the beauty of the countryside, the discomfort of days of walking in continuous rains, the joys of experiencing the walk in the moment,
the various encounters with people and animals, and the tugs of the mind to live in the future of reaching of the goal.

The remainder of the book is descriptive of various trips to Buddhist communities in Western countries and of a meeting of Western Buddhist teachers in Dharamsāla, India with His Holiness, The Dalai Lāma. His Holiness provided guidance and encouragement regarding the group's discussion of the themes: sustaining essence and adaptation to the Western environment, the question of immoral behaviour of teachers, the style of practice, and the dangers of sectarianism of empire building.

The teachings of the Buddha are discussed throughout the book whether woven into the account given about the journey across England or whether presented during talks in the West. These teachings provide direction for leading a more fulfilling life. During one of the talks the five precepts are summarised and presented in concepts for Westerners: (1) not to take the life of any living creature, (2) guard against greed, (3) proper use of sexual behaviour, (4) right speech (refrain from dishonesty, selfishness, spitefulness, aggressiveness and abusive speech), (5) refrain from intoxication, (6) do not be heedless. The author’s great sense of humour helps create acceptance of this wisdom and of sometimes needing to change our mind around. For example, in regard to not taking a life, he talks of having to change his view from having a weak troubled flowering plant to having a green-fly farm. He reminds us that when we live by these clear standards the mind and body become relaxed and we are joyful in the here and now.

He also refers to the teachings of Ramana Maharshi. He says, ‘by asking ‘who am I’ and using inquiry, we create a hesitation in the mind and put the sense of self in perspective; like stepping out of a grey prison cell into sunshine and a field of flowers’.

In a discussion of the materialism which pervades Western countries he gives the following as guidance: Buddha’s response to enlightenment, being totally free beyond suffering, was not to pursue physical pleasures but to live incredibly carefully and modestly, using the things of the earth with frugality. He emphasises that there is nothing that is worth holding on to and that “we are only ever HERE and the time is ever only NOW”.

— Marsha Somers

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED


TRIPURĀ RAHASYA: [orig Skt text with authoritative tr and notes by Samvid]. Pp448, Rs225. SELF ABIDANCE (Sat Darshanam Forty Verses): with Ganapatī Muni’s Skt verses and [very able Engl tr by G. Kamalāshwar of the Hindi Introduction, transl and enlightening comm on the Skt original by Badarī Sankarācharya Śrī Swaroopānanda Sarasvatī]. Pp56, Rs30. Both pub by RMCL, Bangalore 560003 eMail<Maharshi@bgl.vsnil.net.in>


RAMANA MARGAM (extracted Telugu Talks): by V. Krishna Pub; Sándose Trust, a-107, Journalist Cln, Hyderabad 500033. Pp107, Rs25.


SRI Rudram DECODED: Mantras and Medicines for Healing as Coded in the Namaka and Chāmakā [with word for word meaning, āsanās, herbs, & recipes]: by KT Shubhakaran. Pub: C-310, Defence Colony, N.Delhi 110024. Pp310, Rs500
The 121st Jayanti of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated in the usual elaborate manner on January 10. The Ramana Auditorium was specially decorated with flowers.

The proceedings actually commenced even on the previous day, January 9, with an impressive concert of Ramana Music by the Ramananjali Group, Bangalore, led by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan.

The first item of the programme on Jayanti Day was the special puja to Sri Bhagavan performed in the early hours (which is the routine on all days of the dhanurmasa, that is, the Tamil month of Margazhi). This was followed by Vishnu Sahasranama Parayana. Thereafter there was group singing of Tamil hymns of Sri Bhagavan appropriate to the Jayanti day. After recitation of Ramana Chatvarimsat (Forty verses in praise of Sri Bhagavan), a brief puja to Sri Bhagavan was done as per daily routine (during which milk is offered as naivedya). Devotees were treated to breakfast.

Chanting of Maha Narayana Upanishad commenced at eight. Simultaneously Mahanyasa Ekadasa Rudrabhishekam to Ramaneswara Mahalingam was performed. This was followed by special puja. Harati, the finale, came off at eleven.
Devotees and inmates were treated to special lunch. The poor were fed on a large scale.

In the afternoon there was a moving rendering of devotional music by the Amritavarshini Group, Bangalore, led by Srimati Sakkubai Srinivasan.

Sri Kadri Gopalnath, winner of the Kalaimamani award (instituted by the Government of Tamil Nadu) is an accomplished player on the saxophone. He was at his best during his concert of Carnatic music on the saxophone conducted after dinner at the special pandal erected for the occasion between the Ashram dining hall and dispensary.

Master Sri Shashank is an artiste who has earned a great reputation as a flute player even at an early age. His after-dinner concert of Carnatic music on January 11 was widely applauded. This completed the Jayanti proceedings.

At Chennai

The Jayanti was celebrated in an elaborate manner by the Ramana Kendra Trust, Chennai between 24 December 2000 and 10 January 2001 by organising a series of lectures in the evenings.

Swami Ramanananda of Sri Ramanasramam inaugurated the celebrations by lighting a kuthu vilakku. Sri. V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President, delivered the inaugural address.

The speakers were: Sri S. Ram Mohan, Dr. Sudha Seshayyan, Dr. Kalarani Rangaswamy, Sri A.V. Subramanian, Dr. T.N. Pranatarthiharan, Prof. A. Venkatesan, Prof. L.R. Ganesan, Sri S. Shankaranarayanan, Sri Dwaraknath Reddy, Swami Vimalananda, Sri N. Panchapakesan and Sri J. Jayaraman.

Bhajan was conducted on all days before commencement of lectures.


The special features of the programme on January 10 were: puja to Sri Bhagavan, lunch for visitors, bhajan and a Harikatha on Sri Bhagavan by Smt. Shyamala Ramachandran.

A portrait of Sri Bhagavan was taken round in procession along the main streets of Mylapore in the night.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Satsangam, Virugambakkam

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Satsangam, Virugambakkam, Chennai 92 organised the Jayanti celebration at Hari Hara Aiyam, Chinmaya Nagar, on January 26. After Vedic recitation and puja to Sri Bhagavan, Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President, delivered his presidential address. Sri Govindarajan read out his simplified version of Sri Bhagavan's Tamil rendering of Shankaracharya's Dakshinamurty Stotra.

Sri Ravindra Narayanan and Sri Sridhar of Sri Ramanasramam were present on the occasion and gave a concert of Ramana music consisting of songs by Sri Bhagavan as well as those on him. The function came to a close with Harati and distribution of prasad.

At Mumbai

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Centre celebrated the Jayanti on the evening of March 4 at Vivekananda Auditorium, Ramakrishna Math, Khar, Mumbai-52. Swami Chidananda of Chinmaya Mission spoke on the teachings of Sri Bhagavan. Dr. Justice Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud, Judge, Bombay High Court presided over the function.

Ramana Maharshi Heritage and Community Centre, Bangalore

Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore has constructed a Heritage and Community Centre at 74, AECS Lay-out, Sanjaynagar (Behind 4th & 5th Main), Bangalore.

The auditorium at the Centre was formally opened on the morning of January 21 by Sri Ananth Kumar, Honourable Minister for Tourism and Culture, Government of India. Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President, was the Chief Guest.

Swami Ramanananda of Sri Ramanasramam lighted the Kuthu Vilakku. The Honourable Minister spoke on the occasion. There were also speeches by Sri. A. R. Natarajan, Sri. V. S.
Sri. A.R. Natarajan, Swami Ramanananda of Sri Ramanasramam, Swami Virajananda and Sri Ananth Kumar, Central Minister for Tourism and Culture Ramanan, Ashram President, Sri. S. Chandrasekhar and Sri. R.V. Deshpande, Minister for Large and Medium Industries. The morning session concluded with a musical offering by the Ramananjali Group, led by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan.

Swami Virajananda, Dr. A.S. Venugopal Rao, Brahma Shri K. G. Subraya Sharma, Dr. Sarada and others spoke on the occasion.

Heritage and Community Centre

The last item in the programme was a dance-ballet entitled *Purushothama Ramana* by Dr. Ambika Kameswar, Dr. Sarada and artistes of the Ramana Natya Kala Ranga.

Seminar and Cultural Festival at Bangalore

A National Seminar and Cultural Festival on the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan was held between March 10 and March 11 by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore at Ramana Maharshi Heritage Auditorium, Sanjay Nagar, Bangalore.

The speakers at the Kannada Session (March 10) were: Swami Brahmananda, Sri S. Shadakshari, Dr. A.S. Venugopal Rao and Veda Brahma Sri Subraya Sharma. The speakers at the English session (March 11) were: Sri V.S. Ramanan, Swami Virajananda, Dr. Sarada and Sri A.R. Natarajan.

The cultural festival was inaugurated by Swami Ramanananda of Sri Ramanasramam. Ramananjali music and dance ballet were part of the cultural programme.

**Aradhana of Chinna Swamigal (7-2-2001)**

The Aradhana of Sri Chinnaswamigal was celebrated at the Ashram on February 7, with special abhishekam and puja at his samadhi. Inmates and devotees who had assembled for the function were treated to special lunch.

**Celebration of Sivaratri at Ashram (21-2-2001)**

Sivaratri is observed at the Ashram in a solemn manner. The special feature is that there are four additional pujas at night. The chanting of *Ekadasa Rudram* commences at midnight and lasts for above two hours. A good number of devotees assemble for the occasion.

This year Sivaratri came off on February 21 and the celebrations were on the usual lines.

**Sri Vidya Havan (16-3-2001)**

Sri Vidya Havan, the annual function conducted at the Ashram on the first Friday of
the Tamil month of Panguni involves elaborate rituals lasting about ten hours. This year the harati came off on March 16.

The main items of the programme are: navavarana puja, Lalita Sahasranama homa, Lalita Trisati homa, kanya puja and suvasini puja.

The materials offered as oblation to the sacrificial fire are: lotus flowers, clarified butter, purusa twigs, sugarcane, Charkarai pongal (sweet rice pudding), dhurva grass, puffed rice, bilva leaves, white mustard and navadhanya.

Purnahuti, the final oblation came off at four. As usual, a large gathering of devotees was present to witness the havan.

Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad

Swami Ramanananda at the opening function of Library Room on the first floor of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad on 8 April

Celebration of Fifty first Aradhana of Sri Bhagavan at Ashram (21-4-01)

The fifty first anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated in the usual, elaborate manner at the Ashram on April 21.

Smt. Ambika Kameswar gave an impressive concert of Ramana Music in Classical Carnatic style, the previous day (after dinner).

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

Nagaswaram music was provided by Sri T. R. Pichandi and party.

Devotees and visitors were treated to special lunch. Again, there was special abhishekam to Sri Bhagavan in the afternoon.

Sri. S. G. N. Pichayappa and Sri S. G. N. Ganesan of Kathimedu gave a concert of nagaswaram music in the evening.

Kalaimamani Ganesh and Kalaimamani Kumaresh of Chennai gave an impressive concert on the violin after dinner. This marked completion of the celebrations.

Celebration of Mahapuja at Ashram (16-5-01)

Mahapuja commemorating the mukti (Liberation) of Sri Bhagavan’s mother was celebrated at the Ashram on May 16 corresponding to Vaishaka Bahula Navami according to the Hindu calendar.

In accordance with usual practice special abhishekam and puja to Sri Matrubhuteswara was performed in the presence of a large gathering of devotees.

The after-dinner concert of Ramana music in classical Carnatic style by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan and Dr. Sarada was very much appreciated by devotees.
JUST RELEASED!
A limited edition of this out-of-print title:

In Days of Great Peace

MOUNI SADHU

A European seeker, Mouni Sadhu (M. Sudouski) visited Sri Ramana Maharshi in 1949. Three years later he published a detailed account of the impact the Sage of Arunachala had upon him. Based on the diaries he recorded at that time, it reveals the intense inner life of an ardent seeker and also provides a vivid glimpse of the Maharshi, his ashram and the power of his teachings.

Paperback, 223 pages, India: Rs. 60 (postage extra), Foreign: US $10 (postage included)
Order from: SRI RAMANASRAMAM BOOK-DEPOT
Sri Ramanasramam P.O., Tiruvannamalai - 606 603
Tel.: +91-4175-37292. Fax: +91-4175-37491
email: atagamma@vsnt.com
Ashavakra Gita: This is a special archival edition in which Sri Maharshi has written in his own hand the Sanskrit original over the printed text of the Ashavakra Gita in Kannada script. This also carries an English translation. Price Rs. 70/-

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY THE ASHRAM

Manasu Nindina Madhura Smrutulu (A collection of Memories) (Telugu) These are the recollections of Smt. T.R. Kanakamma, an old devotee. Price Rs. 60/-

Sri Ramana Maharshi Vari Upadesamu (The Maharshi and His Message) Telugu translation by Srimati Sonti Anasuya Srimannarayana from the English original of Paul Brunton. Price Rs. 20/-

Sri Ramanochhishtamu (Crumbs from His table) (Telugu) A Telugu translation by Sonti Anasuya Srimannarayana from the English original of Ramanananda Swarnagiri. Price Rs. 10/-

Sri Ramana Smaranamruthamu: (Nectar of Ramana Memories) (Telugu) By Gurram V. Subburamiah. This is a special archival edition. Price Rs. 70/-
OBITUARY

Yogi Ram Surat Kumar
(1918 - 2001)

We report with deep regret the passing away of Yogi Sri Ram Surat Kumar, popularly known as 'Visiri Swami'. He always carried a hand fan with him and hence the appellation 'Visiri Swami'. He was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of the Lord in the early hours of February 20. A popular spiritual personality noted for his utter simplicity, Yogi used to call himself 'this beggar'!

Hailing from a village of Bihar, Yogi was on the spiritual quest even from his early years. He had darshan of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana Maharshi in 1947.

He came to Tiruvannamalai for the second time in 1959. This time he stayed for good. He moved about a lot and could often be seen walking on the slopes of the Arunachala Hill. For years he had no fixed residence and stayed at the Arunachaleswara Temple as well as under a tree at the Tiruvannamalai Railway Station.

Later on, in 1976, his followers arranged for his regular accommodation at a house in Sannidhi Street, Tiruvannamalai. Eventually a regular ashram was built for him in 1994, at Ramana Nagar. This was his abode till the last.

Yogi was a source of strength and inspiration to hundreds of followers. He heard their problems patiently and blessed them in various ways. Everyday hundreds of visitors from all parts of India used to flock to his ashram seeking his darshan.

His samadhi is situated at the large hall where he used to give darshan. The interment ceremony was performed with elaborate rituals on the afternoon of February 21, Sivaratri Day. A large gathering consisting of his devotees, local personalities, officials and members of the general public witnessed this ceremony.

Ramu Sastri

We regret to report the passing away of Sri Ramanatha Sastri — better known as Ramu Sastri to devotees — on the afternoon of March 30. He was 86.

Ramu Sastri had his first darshan of Sri Bhagavan in 1928. He was one of the lucky few who had done Veda Parayana before Sri Bhagavan! His father, Sri Srinivasa Sastri was of great help to the Ashram in the matter of rituals, and particularly so, in the performance of Sri Chakra Puja (since its inception).

Ramu Sastri did service at the Kanchi Kamakoti Math for about twenty years. After his return from Kanchipuram his services were available to the Ashram. The Ashram could count on his help on special occasions like Koti Archana, kumbhabhishekam, Sri Vidya Havan and the like.

For about fifteen years at a stretch Sastri used to be present at the Ashram without fail on Fridays (as well as other days on which puja was due) for participating in Sri Chakra Puja.

Ramu Sastri participated as usual in Sri Vidya Havan conducted at the Ashram on Friday March 16. It is significant that he died on a Friday, exactly a fortnight later!

May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Lalita Tripurasundari (Shakti).
FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GURU PURNIMA (VYASA PUJA)</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRISHNA JAYANTI (GOKULASHTAMI)</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINAYAKA CHATURTHI</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105TH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT AT ARUNACHALA</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVARATRI FESTIVAL COMMENCES ON</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARASWATI PUJA</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEPAVALI</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KARTIGAI DEEPAM FESTIVAL COMMENCES ON</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KARTIGAI DEEPAM</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRI BHAGAVAN'S 122ND JAYANTI</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PONGAL</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINNA SWAMIGAL ARADHANA</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAHA SIVARATRI</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRI VIDYA HAVAN</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELUGU NEW YEAR'S DAY</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAMIL NEW YEAR'S DAY</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement about ownership and other particulars about THE MOUNTAIN PATH according to Form IV, Rule 8, Circular of the Registrar of Newspapers for India:

1. Place of Publication — Madras-15
2. Periodicity of its publication — Quarterly
3. Printer's Name — T.V. Venkataraman
4. Publisher's Name — V.S. Ramanan
5. Name of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than 1% of the total capital — SRI RAMANASRAMAM

V.S. Ramanan hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: 31.3.2001
Signature of the Publisher:
(SD) V.S. Ramanan

Published by Sri V.S. Ramanan, President, Board of Trustees, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai-606 603. S. India, and printed by Sri T.V. Venkataraman at Kartik Printers, 12, Aranganathan Subway Road, Chennai 600 015. Editor: RAMAMANI (N. RAMASUBRAMANYAN).
I (this poor being)? But, luckily I see you as the remover of all my troubles, you who are easy of access here to anyone (except the dumb) and whose devotee becomes the master of the riches of the universe!

A significant feature of the method of nama japa is that it is within the reach of all. A brahmachari (student) can take up the practice. So can a grihasta (householder) or sannyasin (monk). The apparent simplicity of the method does not free the devotee from conforming to certain basic rules of religious conduct. Those who take to Bhagavan Nama are called bhagavatas. The Padma Purana lays down certain rules to be generally observed by these bhagavatas.

Bhagavatas are expected not to differentiate between Siva and Vishnu. They are forbidden from adopting an irreverent attitude to the Vedas, the guru and virtuous persons in general. They should not indulge in calumny. They should have implicit faith in nama siddhanta, and should not impart it to those who lack such faith. Sticking to the ideals of ahimsa (non-injury) and satya (speaking the truth) is of the utmost importance. It is also essential that they should not covet the property of others.

The power of chanting the Divine Name is well brought out in a verse in praise of Hanuman, the exemplary devotee of Rama. It says that he is present (in invisible form) “with his palms folded in reverence and eyes filled with tears of ecstasy, wherever the name of Rama is chanted”!

In nama japa the devotee recites the Name in privacy — unknown to others. In nama sankirtana (group singing) the devotees sing in unison and the atmosphere vibrates with the presence of the Divine. These methods are complementary to each other.

Even now all programmes of nama sankirtana commence only after offering salutation to Sridhara (Ayyaval), Bodhendra and Sadguru Swamy. The tradition of bhajana sampradaya founded and nurtured by these great masters is still kept strong and intact in South India.

“Know well that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than anything in the world . . . Covet not what thou mayest not have. Be not willing to have what may hinder thee and deprive thee of liberty within.

“Why art thou spent in vain grief? Why art thou worn with needless cares? If thou seekest this thing or that or wouldst be in this or that other place for thy own convenience or pleasure, thou shalt never be at rest nor free from trouble of mind, for in every matter something shall be found wanting and in every place there shall be someone to cross thee.”

— Thomas a Kempis.