"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>The Light of the Self — Editorial</th>
<th>133</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sri Maharshi's Instructions to F.H. Humphreys — B.V. Narasimha Swami</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Maha Nirvana</em> of Sri Bhagavan — Prof. K. Swaminathan</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindu Doctrine of <em>Karma</em> and Reincarnation — Prof. M.K. Venkatarama Iyer</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Are We, Anyway? — I.S. Madugula</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Ramana's Wondrous Grace</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ — Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramana Sadguru (A Radio Talk) — Sadhu Arunachala (Major A.W. Chadwick)</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Karma and Jnana</em> — Prof. K. Swaminathan</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Ramana Maharshi and the Indian Philosophic Tradition — His Highness Sri Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar Bahadur (Maharaja of Mysore)</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Samipya and Sayujya</em> — I.S. Madugula</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscripts of Sri Bhagavan</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is <em>Nirvana</em>? — Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sri Ramana Gita</em></td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, Shankaracharya of Kanchi — P. Sridharan</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ and Ramana — Banning Richardson</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Please turn over]
Contents (Contd.)

Talks with Mr. Wu! — Wei Wu Wei 233

Can a Christian Follow the Maharshi? — Sagittarius 234

The Light that Never Fades — Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan 239

Ramana Maharshi and the Availability of Self-realisation — Douglas E. Harding 242

The Inheritance of the Master — Mount Sadhu 247

Book Reviews — Compiled and Edited by J. Jayaraman 251

Ashram Bulletin 259

The Mountain Path

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

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The Mountain Path is dedicated to
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
In times long gone by, life was not on organised lines. In those remote times man obtained food only through hunting and fishing. Of course nature itself provided food in liberal measure in the form of fruits, particularly in the deep, wild woods. Farming had not even been conceived of as a means of growing foodgrains.

The origin of the human race, the growth of civilisation and the development of religion — all these constitute fascinating subjects for study. According to some scholars the original home of the human race was India. Some others think it was Central Asia or Africa. According to many scholars, civilisation — in the sense in which we understand it now — originated in Egypt and Babylon.

History may be broadly divided into recorded and unrecorded segments. As far as unrecorded history is concerned, we rely mostly on surmises — mainly supported by archaeological findings. Our aim here is not to go deep into the history of man or go even deeper — into the story of prehistoric man. However it is reasonable to say that it is not possible to trace the evolution of the religious thought or pursuits of man right from prehistoric times, in any definitive manner.

For a reliable and comprehensive world view on religion and spirituality one can safely look to the Veda. It embodies eternal truths and is an unfailing source of enlightenment and inspiration. As far as the Rig Veda in particular is concerned, there are strong grounds for taking it to be the oldest
religious book of the world, or even the oldest book of the world.

The conventional division of Veda into the Purva Mimamsa and Utara Mimamsa portions apparently implies that the former gives importance purely to rituals — as if rituals were an end in themselves. But a careful study of the Sruti as a whole will show that its real aim is to prepare man for the final goal of liberation.

The importance of the Upanishads lies in their direct statement of the truth. They act as the channels for spiritual illumination. We cannot find in the Upanishads systematic reflection or graded systems of thought. Veda being apaurusheya (not of human origin) and sanatana (timeless), it is not within the confines of ordinary perception. The Svetasvatara Upanishad says that the sage Svetasvatara saw the truth owing to his tapah prabhava (power of tapas or contemplation) combined with deva prasada (grace of God). Hence the Upanishads are a class by themselves and are not to be treated as metaphysical treatises recording 'speculations' in the Western sense of the term. The truth revealed in the Upanishads can be tested or verified by logic or reasoning, as well as personal intuitive experience.

The essence of the Upanishads lies in the four mahavakyas. They are: Tattvamasi (That thou art), Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman), Ayamatma Brahma (This Self is Brahman) and Prajnanam Brahma (Consciousness is Brahman). Thus the Sruti affirms the unity of the jiva (individual self) and Brahman, the Supreme Self.

Coming to recent times and analysing the common pattern of mundane life in general without taking up the question of religion, we can come to certain broad conclusions. What does man do in pursuit of legitimate material or worldly aims? What are his activities and how are they correlated to his age or position?

Shakespeare answers this question in a very beautiful manner in the passage popularly known as The Seven Ages of Man.

He says:
All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.
The first stage in life is of course that of the infant. Then comes the role of the schoolboy. Man thereafter takes up the roles of a lover, soldier and justice (judge). The sixth stage is that of an old man. And at last, bereft of senses and the power of the organs, he enters the stage of second childhood. This is the seventh and last stage. This ends the story of man.

To quote Shakespeare (in parts):
. . . At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.
. . .
. . . Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the
pawd,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick to
quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation.
Even in the cannon’s mouth . . . .
. . . Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness, and mere
oblivion —
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans
everything.1

Now Shakespeare does not deal with the
question of religion here. He only gives a
beautiful description of life as it is lived. Ap­
parently, there is nothing wrong with such
life.

But there also arises the question: how life
should be lived. What is the real aim of life?
This question is dealt with by Shankaracharya
in the following verse.

Shankara says:

When he [man] is a child, he is intent on
playing. When he is a youth he is lost in
the charms of woman. In old age he is
drowned in worries. Alas! No one is after
[attaining] Brahman.2

The spiritual effort that should be put
forth by the sadhaka is well summarised in a
verse composed by the disciples of
Shankaracharya.

What pure brahmins seek so eagerly by
repetition of the Vedas, by religious gifts,
by earnest application of their hard-earned
knowledge, and by renunciation, is the
Truth, That Thou art!3

In spite of the clear revelation by the Sruti
that the individual self is not separate from
the Supreme Self and in spite of strenuous
efforts on his part, man does not easily reach
the goal. Why should this happen? The only
reason that could be adduced is that it is
caused by avidya (ignorance). Now avidya is
a general term and involves other ramifica­
tions as well.

Sanatstujata says:

. . . I tell you, forgetfulness (of our true
nature) is death and constant mindfulness,
immortality . . . .

This death comes out of the ego of men
in the form of anger, ignorance and de­
lusion. Following evil ways, as men gen­
erally do, under the impulse of ego, hardly
anyone attains union with the Self.4

Ignorance acts as the stumbling block to
realising one’s true nature. It is the obstruc­
tion to true knowledge. One cannot say that
all seekers are dejected or lose all hope of
reaching the goal. However a good number
of seekers do often feel that there is not
enough progress and succumb to a mood of
frustration.

Ignorance is a phenomenon which is well
recognised. However it has no concrete con­
tent and defies analysis. Ignorance is caused
by the mind. But the search into ignorance

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1 As You Like It, Act II, Scene 7.
2 Charpata Punjaika Stotra, verse 7.
3 Guru Stuti, V.7.
4 Sanatsujatiya, 1.4.7.
has to be done only by the mind and within the mind. It is a futile exercise.

Heinrich Zimmer says:

The truth about ignorance cannot be known, because so long as one remains within the bounds of ignorance, ignorance itself constitutes the limiting horizon of one's thought. And the knowers cannot know the truth about ignorance, because as soon as their consciousness becomes identical with Brahman, ignorance (for them, at least) no longer exists. Hence ignorance somehow both is and is not, or perhaps, rather neither is, nor is not. In any case, it is more of an enigma even than Brahman.5

The effect of ignorance is the projection of a second entity — other than oneself. This gives rise to fear. This is the sole basis of fear.

The Sruti says:

He was afraid. Therefore people (still) are afraid to be alone. He thought, 'If there is nothing else but me, what am I afraid of?' From that alone his fear was gone, for, what was there to fear? It is from a second entity that fear comes.6

The Sruti passage (italicised) has often been quoted by Sri Maharshi to point out that duality is a mere projection of the mind.

Shankaracharya's commentary on this passage may be summarised as follows:

Viraj, the first embodied being with a human form was afraid (just like us) owing to a false notion about his extinction. Right knowledge is the means of removing this fear. By right knowledge one understands that there is no rival. Therefore there is nothing to kill one.

The theory of error, or rather spiritual error, has varied implications. In classical Advaita, a distinction is made between avidya (lack of knowledge, ignorance) and maya (illusion). But such discussion would take us too far into the realm of polemics. It has much value from the academic point of view, but none from that of sadhana.

In spite of all these factors it would be incorrect to say that one is totally ignorant of oneself. One has perforce some idea, however remote, about the Self. The inevitable conclusion is that the individual self is never completely overtaken or overwhelmed by ignorance!

Shankaracharya says:

The Self is not absolutely beyond apprehension, because It is apprehended as the content of the concept of 'I' and because the Self, opposed to the non-Self is well known in the world as an immediately perceived (that is, self-revealing) entity.7

The Sruti texts teach the self-luminous nature of the Self. The Self shines by itself. It also illumines the objective world.

5 Philosophies of India, pp. 421-22.
6 Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I.IV.2.
7 Preamble to Shankara Bhashya on Vedanta Sutras.
The Sruti says:

The sun shines not there, nor the moon and stars, these lightnings shine not, where then could this fire be? Everything shines only after that shining light. His shining illumines all this world.  

Commenting on this passage Shankaracharya says that the world has not the ability to illumine itself. The Lord, the Self is the sole source of illumination.

Jnanis also make their declaration to this effect.

Shankaracharya says:

To see a light, no other light is needed. So also, the Self being self-effulgent, it needs no other means of knowledge. It shines of itself.

What follows is another verse of Shankaracharya selected by Sri Maharshi for the contemplation of seekers. It is clear from this verse that the Self is the Light of Lights.

Master: What is the light for you?  
Disciple: The sun by day, a lamp by night.  
M: What is the light that perceives that light?  
D: The eye.  
M: What is the light that illumines the eye?  
D: That light is the intellect.  
M: What is the light that knows the intellect?  
D: It is the 'I'.  
M: You are (therefore) the Supreme Light of lights.  
D: That am I.

Intense practice is necessary for the purification of the jiva and the destruction of ignorance. Self-knowledge is the goal. Its attainment does not mean the acquisition of anything new. It only means the discovery of what is already within us.

Shankaracharya says:

Owing to ignorance, the Self now appears to be covered up; on the removal of ignorance the pure Self will shine forth of Itself, like the sun after dispersal of clouds.

Sri Krishna says:

Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their heart, destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the effulgent light of knowledge.

The light of the Self is ever within. The earnest seeker is always assured of divine grace. This is the message of Vedanta.

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8 Mundaka Upanishad, II.2.11.  
9 Atma Bodha, Verse 28.  
10 Supplement to the Forty Verses, Verse 5.  
11 Atma Bodha, Verse 4.  
12 Bhagavad Gita, X.11.
Sri Maharshi’s Instructions to F. H. Humphreys

By B.V. Narasimha Swami

According to available records, Frank Humphreys was the first Westerner to visit Sri Bhagavan. He had his first darshan at Virupaksha Cave in November 1911, in the company of Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni. Humphreys was then Assistant Superintendent of Police, Vellore.

Sri Bhagavan was specially gracious to him and gave detailed instructions on the essential spiritual quest. It is very significant that he also remarked, “I am giving these instructions as a Guru gives them to a disciple.”

A synopsis of the teaching derived from Maharshi during his visits was prepared by Humphreys and sent to a friend in England. Later this was published in the International Psychic Gazette, London. Subsequently, this was incorporated by B. V. Narasimha Swami in Self-Realisation, (his biography of Sri Bhagavan). We present below the relevant portion from this work.

(Humphreys retired from service early and entered a monastery in England).

Salutation to the feet of the Guru Sri Dakshinamurti, who sees within himself the entire universe, which resembles the image of a city in a mirror, which appears to be outside of him just as objects seen in a dream are outside the dreamer, but which merges into himself in the state of Realisation — for then he sees the Self alone, just as the awakened dreamer sees himself alone and not the objects he dreamt of.

— Dakshinamurti Stotra of Shankara.

A master is one who has meditated solely on God, has flung his whole personality into the sea of God, and drowned and forgotten it there, till he becomes only the instrument of God, and when his mouth opens it speaks God’s words without effort or forethought; and when he raises a hand, God flows again through that, to work a miracle.

From Self-Realisation (Chapter XVIII): Sri Ramanasramam (1936).
Do not think too much of psychical phenomena and such things. Their number is legion; and once faith in the psychical thing is established in the heart of a seeker, such phenomena have done their work. Clairvoyance, clairaudience, and such things are not worth having, when far greater illumination and peace are possible without them, than with them. The master takes on these powers as a form of self-sacrifice.

The idea that a master is simply one who has attained power over the various occult senses by long practice and prayer or anything of the kind, is absolutely false. No master ever cared a rap for occult powers, for he has no need for them in his daily life.

The phenomena we see are curious and surprising — but the most marvellous of all we do not realise and that is that one, and only one, illimitable force is responsible for:

(a) All the phenomena we see; and
(b) The act of seeing them.

Do not fix your attention on all these changing things of life, death and phenomena. Do not think even of the actual act of seeing or perceiving them, but only of that which sees all these things — that which is responsible for it all. This will seem nearly impossible at first, but by degrees the result will be felt. It takes years of steady, daily practice, and that is how a master is made. Give a quarter of an hour a day for this practice. Try to keep the mind unshakenly fixed on That which sees. It is inside yourself. Do not expect to find that ‘That’ is something definite on which the mind can be fixed easily: it will not be so. Though it takes years to find that ‘That’, the results of this concentration will be seen in four or five months’ time — in all sorts of unconscious clairvoyance, in peace of mind, in power to deal with troubles, in power all round, yet always an unconscious power.

I have given you this teaching in the words same as the master gives to intimate chelas. From now onwards, let your whole thought in meditation be not on the act of seeing, nor on what you see, but immovably on That which sees.

Attainment

One gets no reward of Attainment. Then one understands that one does not want a reward. As Krishna says, “You have the right to work, but not to the fruits thereof.” Perfect attainment is simply worship, and worship is attainment.

If you sit down and realise that you think only by virtue of the one Life, and that the mind, animated by the one Life into the act of thinking is a part of the whole which is God, then you argue your mind out of existence as a separate entity; and the result is that mind and body physically (so to speak) disappear; and the only thing that remains is Being, which is at once existence and non-existence and not explainable in words or ideas.

A master cannot help being perpetually in this state with only this difference, that in some, to us, incomprehensible way, he can use the mind, body, and intellect too, without falling back into the delusion of having separate consciousness.
Religion

It is useless to speculate, useless to try and take a mental or intellectual grasp and work from that. That is only religion, a code for children and for social life, a guide to help us to avoid shocks, so that the inside fire may burn up the nonsense in us, and teach us, a little sooner, common sense, i.e., a knowledge of the delusion of separateness.

Religion, whether it be Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Theosophy, or any other kind of “Ism” or “Sophy” or system, can only take us to the one point where all religions meet and no further.

God

That one point where all religions meet is the realisation—in no mystical sense, but in the most worldly and everyday sense, and the more worldly and everyday and practical the better,—of the fact that God is everything and everything is God.

From this point begins the work of the practice of this mental comprehension, and all it amounts to, is the breaking of a habit. One has to cease calling things ‘things’, and must call them God; and instead of thinking them to be things, must know them to be God; instead of imagining ‘existence’ to be the only thing possible, must realise that, this (phenomenal) existence is only the creation of the mind, that ‘non-existence’ is a necessary sequence if you are going to postulate ‘existence’.

The knowledge of things only shows the existence of an organ to cognize. There are no sounds to the deaf, no sights for the blind, and the mind is merely an organ of conception or of appreciation of certain sides of God.

God is infinite, and therefore existence and non-existence are merely His counterparts. Not that I wish to say that God is made up to definite component parts. It is hard to be comprehensive when talking of God. True knowledge comes from within and not from without. And true knowledge is not ‘knowing’ but ‘seeing’.

Realisation

Realisation is nothing but seeing God literally. Our greatest mistake is that we think of God as acting symbolically and allegorically, instead of practically and literally.

Take a piece of glass, paint colours and forms on it, and put the same into a magic lantern, turn on a little light, and the colours and the forms painted on the glass are reproduced on the screen. If that light were not turned on, you would not see the colours of the slide on the screen.

How are colours formed? By breaking up white light with a many-sided prism. So it is with a man’s character. It is seen when the Light of Life (God) is shining through it, i.e., in a man’s actions. If the man is sleeping or dead, you do not see his character, and causing it to act in thousand different ways, in response to its contact with this many-sided world, can you perceive a man’s character. If white light had not been broken up and put into forms and shapes on our magic lantern
slide, we should never have known that there was a piece of glass in front of the light, for the light would have shone clearly through. In a sense, that white light was marred, and had some of its clearness taken from it by having to shine through the colours on the glass.

So it is with an ordinary man. His mind is like the screen. On it shines light, dulled and changed because he has allowed the many-sided world to stand in the way of the Light (God) and break it up. He sees only the effects of the Light (God) instead of the Light (God) Himself, and his mind reflects the effects he sees just as the screen reflects the colours on the glass. Take away the prism and the colours vanish, absorbed back into the white light from whence they came. Take away the colours from the slide and the light shines clearly through. Take away from our sight the world of effects we see, and let us look only into the causes, and we shall see the Light (God).

A master in meditation, though the eyes and ears be open, fixes his attention so firmly on ‘That Which Sees’ that he neither sees nor hears, nor has any physical consciousness at all — nor mental either, but only spiritual.

We must take away the world, which causes our doubts, which clouds our mind, and the light of God will shine clearly through. How is the world taken away? When, for example, instead of seeing a man you see and say, “This is God animating a body,” which body answers, more or less perfectly, to the directions of God, as a ship answers more or less perfectly to her helm.

Sins

What are sins? Why, for example, does a man drink too much? Because he hates the idea of being bound — bound by the incapacity to drink as much as he wishes. He is striving after liberty in every sin he commits. This striving after liberty is the first instinctive action of God in a man’s mind. For God knows that he is not bound. Drinking too much does not give a man liberty, but then the man does not know that he is really seeking liberty. When he realises that, he sets about seeking the best way to obtain liberty.

But the man only gains that liberty when he realises that he was never bound. The I, I, I’s who feel so bound are really the illimitable Spirit. I am bound because I know nothing that I do not sense by one of the senses. Whereas I am all the time that which senses in every body, in every mind. These bodies and minds are only the tools of the “I”, the illimitable Spirit.

What do I want with the tools who am the tools themselves, as the colours are the White Light?

Jesus, the man, was utterly unconscious \(^1\) when he worked his miracles and spoke his wonderful words. It was White Light, the Life, which is the cause and effect, acting in

\(^1\) i.e., ‘unconscious of being a separate finite personality.’
perfect concert. “My father and I are one.” Give up the idea of “I” and “Mine.” Can the body possess anything? Can the mind possess anything? Lifeless tools are both, unless the Light of God be shining through. These things which we see and sense, are only the split-up colours of the One Illimitable Spirit.

How can you best worship God? Why, by not trying to worship Him (but) by giving up your WHOLE SELF to Him and showing that every thought, every action, is only a working of that one Life (God) — more or less perfect according as it is conscious or unconscious.

THE SEER’S WITHIN
By Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

All in the Each, a feast of Truth, a blaze,
Life’s sorry dual separation done.
Something in one begins to realize
That it is possible to change the flesh
With all its cells into a heaven of eyes
Smiling with wise aloofness on the mesh
Of pale illusions wandering below,
There in the shadow-haunted depths clean-cloven
To tremulous gleams of treacherous colours woven,
Wide-spread to snare the soul and slowly capture
Its sovereign meaning and authentic rapture.

How wonderful Thou art,
How crystalline, O vision of the heart!
How like a high-born seer thou dost remain
Above the world’s annoy,
Interpreting each weariness, each pain
Of life around in terms of veiled joy!
How automatically in thy plan
Each image takes a sure and equal place,
The cramped prison-cell, the boundless space,
The fleeting bird, the grass, the drop of rain,
Both haunted beast and man!
Continually I sense thee freeing
The outer eye into a deep and deeper seeing.
We are meeting today under the shadow of a great calamity, the greatest that could have befallen us — the passing away of our master Sri Ramana Maharshi. And though it is exactly a month now since it happened, we have hardly recovered yet from the shock of that blow, the poignancy of such grief. It was no small thing, no ordinary good fortune that it had been given to us to move in close contact for several years with the most remarkable man that ever trod this earth in recent times, one who though he lived in our times, was a direct linear descendant of the Vedic sages and Upanishadic seers, one who was the Vedas personified, one who was an outstanding example of the type described in our scriptures as a sthitaprajna, trigunatita, jivanmukta etc., one human to all appearance and yet one with the Divine by reason of that attainment of jnana which only according to the Gita, and all our scriptures, burns out all karma and takes one beyond the endless sea of births and deaths into that heaven of mukthi, bliss, liberation where all is peace and blessedness (and that even while one is yet in this earth). Now, if he was only this, a great walking monument of spiritual perfection, standing aloof and apart on the heights of jnana, inaccessible to common folks like me who know little or nothing of the spiritual life, it might have been easier for us to bear this separation.

But as you know he was more than a great spiritual giant. He was the highest master that one could get on earth, who kept up the best traditions of gurus in this country. He was not only our teacher, but our father, mother, friend — one who loved us whether we deserved it or not, whether we were able to make use of it or not. Among the thousands who became his devotees there were all sorts of and conditions of men, with varying degrees of evolution on the spiritual path. All of them got whatever they needed and went satisfied that Bhagavan was looking after them.

In this great crowd of his followers there were certainly some who could establish mental or spiritual contact with him and who, wherever they were and whether they could obtain physical contact with him or not, were still satisfied and sure that his influence was theirs to draw upon whenever they wanted. To such, the trial that has come upon us all...
in the shape of Bhagavan's physical separation from us may not be hard to bear. But there was a very big class of followers to whom it was a real solace to run up to Bhagavan for physical company and to whom the mental and spiritual contact, though none the less important or effective seemed to be in some unaccountable way dependent on his physical frame. Whatever our troubles, whether they were ills of body, financial worries, family quarrels and complications, official oppressions or injustices or any of the thousand and one things that have been devised by the desire to harass people, some of us had only one way of dealing with them all whenever they became unendurable. We just ran up to Bhagavan and basked in his presence and somehow the problem had been solved, the position eased or anyhow you did not seem worried any more.

Where and to whom can we run up now? Gone is that beaming smile with which you used to be welcomed into his presence. Gone is that kind mood which you used to take for an assurance that Bhagavan has taken cognisance of your matter and all will be well with you thereafter. With what affection would he not sometimes enquire about your journey? With what motherly solicitude would he not ask you if you have had something to eat and, if not, direct you first to feed the inner man and then come to the hall. With what sympathy would he not enquire about any who may be ailing in your family and about whom you may have written to him already. Those who have had such experiences — and their number is legion — find the cruel separation of this death all too hard to bear.

Though several months of relentless and memorable disease had prepared us in a way for the inevitable end, when the blow actually fell, we felt, to quote Tennyson:

Like the unhappy bark
That strikes by night a crassy shelf
And staggers blindly ere she sink.

To borrow a phrase from the same source, we have been widowed crying 'my Bhagavan', 'our Bhagavan' etc. All joy and beauty have gone out of our life along with all sense of security. We have become orphans all of a sudden. To many, Bhagavan was not merely guru, but father and mother in one, not merely as a conventional or polite way of expressing his regard for us, but literally, without any exaggeration. For myself I have had the best affection from him, more than I have had from any relatives or others in this world. I used to address him in all my letters as 'Ammaiappa', which is a beautiful word in Tamil to convey the idea of one who combines in himself the attributes of father and mother and I used to subscribe myself as 'Ramana Sei' i.e., Ramana's child. And how did he react to this? Was he indifferent how I addressed him? Did he leave me to imagine that he was taking no special notice of my queer way of addressing him? If anybody came to him and sang before him any Tamil song in which the word 'Ammaiappa' occurred, he will turn round to see if I am there and his eyes will be asking me, 'Are you attending? Here is another using your name'.
himself to so many of us that when we find he is no longer at Tiruvannamalai for us to run up there and brace ourselves up or, as we used to say, with Bhagavan’s approval, charge our battery afresh with his current, we feel utterly lost, immersed in gloom, literally not knowing which way to turn.

In this state of mind it occurred to me it would be really something of a consolation, the best consolation that could be had under the circumstances if I can come across other devotees of Bhagavan, others whom I have come to regard as fellow members with me in Bhagavan’s great family, fellow devotees who would remind me of Bhagavan, with whom I can exchange confidences and share experiences, whose company would be an added pleasure even for thinking of Bhagavan and worshipping him. In fact the company of those who have equal cause for grief with you and who have been dear to you as dear to the departed, is a great consoling factor. That is human experience. This is the urge that made me move in the direction of taking steps to start a centre in Madras, where Bhagavan’s devotees may meet once a week or oftener and console each other in the first place and in the next place endeavour by various means to keep alive within themselves the light that has been kindled in them by that departed master. Whether the new centre or sabha should also labour for the propagation of Bhagavan’s ashram at Tiruvannamalai is frankly out of my calculation at present. If Bhagavan desires that this small centre should in the fullness of time and as it matures take upon itself in his judgment and under his guidance such ambitious tasks, by all means let such developments come. But as for me, give me at once some sabha or centre, however modest and humble, where I can meet old devotees of Bhagavan, feel as if I was once again in the old atmosphere and do something in common with them by talk, reminiscent devotional song or silent meditation (or all of these in turn) to keep alive and develop the plant of spirituality that Bhagavan has planted in me.

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SRI BHAGAVAN’S COMPASSION TO A WOODCUTTER

By Kunju Swami

There was a woodcutter, who would come at a particular time everyday and stand in front of Skandashram. Bhagavan used to give him sugarcandy. But we felt that his coming everyday was a nuisance.

When we grumbled, Bhagavan pacified us saying, “Poor fellow! His throat is parched with thirst. Early in the morning he climbs up the hill along with his animal. On the hill he does not have anything to eat or drink. Even at Mulaippal Tirtham he would not be permitted to drink water. This sugarcandy gives relief to his parched throat. We have a stock of sugarcandy. We all have our food served here. Poor man, should we not help him quench his thirst?” Bhagavan’s words came from a choked throat!
The Hindu Doctrine of 
*Karma* and Reincarnation

By Prof. M. K. Venkatarama Iyer

This is a characteristic Hindu doctrine. All schools of Indian philosophy, with the sole exception of the Charvaka, have admitted it. A remarkable point is that even Buddhism accepts it though it does not believe in a permanent entity which could migrate from one bodily existence to another. The epics and the *puranas* reinforce the doctrine and bring it home to the minds of the generality by means of attractive stories which combine the artful narration of events with unobtrusive moral instruction.

That man has to pay for his misdeeds in the shape of sorrow and suffering, that no one who indulges in wrongdoing can hope to escape its evil consequences, that punishment will overtake the sinner, if not here and now at least at some future time, that we are the architects of our own destiny, that we have to thank only ourselves if we find ourselves on a bed of thorns, and that wisdom consists in putting the best face on our troubles — these ideas have been so repeatedly borne in on our minds that they have become a part of our very being. They are handed down from generation to generation as a part of our national heritage. It never occurs even to unlettered persons to shift the blame for their tribulations on to other shoulders. That their lot in life is the outcome of their own deeds in a past birth lies most effortlessly on their lips. The fact that the people of this vast land are, by and large, so law-abiding and peaceful despite their poverty and a thousand other ills is to be attributed not a little to the continuous propagation of this doctrine.

It is a doctrine fully supported by the revealed texts (*sruti*), reasoning (*yukti*) and the experience of seers (*anubhava*). Several passages in the *Upanishads*, especially the *Chandogya* and *Brihadaranyaka*, bear on it. "He who entertains desires and prizes them is reborn in a place and environment best suited to his attainment."1 "The self is identified with desire. What it desires it resolves upon; what it resolves upon it performs, and what it performs, it attains to. Through attachment it attains the result of its performance (in a future birth)."2

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1 *Mundaka*, III, II, 2.

man is his volition: as he wills in this world, so does he become on departing from here."  

"Some souls enter into the womb and become embodied (as human beings), while others become inanimate objects, according to their actions and thoughts."  

"As a man behaves and acts, so does he become; by doing good he becomes good and by doing evil he becomes evil."  

"Those who have been of good conduct here will quickly attain a good birth — that of a brahmin or a kshatriya or a vaisya, but those who have been of evil conduct will attain an evil birth — that of a dog or a pig or a chandala."  

When the soul departs from the body "it is accompanied by its knowledge, work and past experiences." Impressions are left on it by the actions performed by a man throughout his lifetime. Every action leaves its impress not only on the nervous system but also on the soul. The oftener we perform an action the stronger and more well defined the impress becomes, until in the end it becomes a tendency (samskara). Under the influence of these acquired samskaras men feel themselves impelled, as by an outer force, towards certain courses of action. We may even feel helpless against them; and if unfortunately they are of the wrong kind we indulge in wrongdoing almost against our better judgement. Arjuna gives expression to this feeling when he says, "What impels a man to commit sin, O Krishna, in spite of himself, driven as it were, by some force?" And the Lord Himself admits that "all beings follow their nature (prakriti). What can repression do?" It will be remembered that when Ravana's grandfather advised him to retrace his steps and restore Sita to her Lord the latter replied that he would rather break in two than bend before anybody. That was his nature and no one could overcome his nature. Evil-doers often take cover under this excuse.  

If a man's tendencies are, fortunately, of the right kind they lead to good actions which are beneficial to himself and others. Such people go on doing good without even being conscious of it. It comes as natural to them as breathing. They expect nothing in return. The samskaras which they have inherited from their own past make it easy for them to lead a life of service. Heredity and environment may have something to do with it but the most important factor is one's own samskaras. In spite of noble parentage and helpful surroundings, many sons do not live up to expectations, while, the contrary is also true: that a profound philosopher or inspired poet emerges from an unpromising environment. It is also a familiar sight to see one son achieve world fame while others born of the same parents remain obscure. These may look like vagaries but are not really so. Over and above heredity and environment there is the legacy of the past which the individual
carries with him in his transmigratory experience.

To clinch the point we may refer to the phenomenon of precocity. We sometimes come across boy prodigies who take to some special study such as mathematics or music like fish to water and make rapid progress with little effort. The way they go about it looks more like picking up old threads than learning something new. "By his former habit he is led on in spite of himself," says the Lord.\(^\text{11}\) If we can argue from effects to causes,\(^\text{12}\) we are compelled to believe that these exceptional men of genius bring a rich heritage with them when they enter into the conditions of another bodily existence.

What it comes to, then, is that the soul which arises in a new body does so, as the English poet says, "Not in entire forgetfulness, not in utter nakedness" but carrying with it its own accumulated tendencies. These do not actually inhere in the soul for, according to Hindu teaching, this is untouched by good or evil. It is pure Consciousness which stands apart and simply witnesses the vicissitudes through which the individual being (jiva) passes. If the tendencies do not inhere in the soul they must inhere in something else, for without a substrate or vehicle they could not pass from one bodily existence to another. Since the gross physical body is burnt to ashes after death (or is buried and decays) we are driven to the conclusion that there must be some other vehicle. This is said to be the subtle body composed of the finer essence of the five elements.

The Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the soul as being encased within five sheaths one within another, like the skins of an onion. These are known as kosas. The outermost is known as the sheath of matter (annamaya kosa). This is identified with the physical body (stula sarira). The next three, known as pranamaya, manomaya and vijnanamaya kosas, comprise the subtle body (sukshma or linga sarira). When the soul, due to primeval ignorance, identifies itself with this subtle body it is known as the individual being (jiva). It is this jiva which transmigrates from one bodily existence to another, carrying with it all its acquired good and evil tendencies.

On leaving the body, the jiva, without loss of time, enters another kept ready for it and quite suited to the working out of the karma which has come to fruition. "Just as when a king is touring the country the people of the village which he is expected to visit wait for him with various kinds of food and drink and dwelling place, so is a suitable body and fit environment kept ready for the jiva."\(^\text{13}\) He enters this immediately after putting off the previous body. "Just as a caterpillar on a stem of grass goes to the end of it and then takes hold of another support and draws itself forward on to it, so does the self throw aside this body, take hold of another support and draw itself to it."\(^\text{14}\) Commenting on this

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\(^\text{11}\) Gita, VI, 44.
\(^\text{12}\) As from the prosperity which they enjoyed King Dilipa's subjects argued that the policy of their ruler must be essentially sound.
\(^\text{13}\) Br. Up., IV, III, 11-12.
\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., IV, IV, 3.
passage, Sri Shankara makes the point quite clear. "The impressions called past experiences stretch out like a caterpillar from the body, while retaining their seat in the heart, and build another body in accordance with past actions; and when the new body is ready they let go their grip on the old." 

In the physical realm no disturbance can take place without corresponding repercussions. This is what we mean by saying that every cause has its effect. Sometimes the effect may occur almost immediately and in other cases in the more or less distant future. That every event has its cause and that nothing can occur without a proper and sufficient cause are converse statements of the same law. *Karma* and reincarnation are an exact counterpart of the law of causation which holds on the physical plane. No man can do wrong and expect to get away with it. Punishment will surely overtake him, sooner or later, if not in this lifetime then in another. Just as corn takes time to ripen for harvest, so wrong actions take their time to recoil on the doer. Reincarnation is therefore the logical complement of the law of *karma*. The wrongdoer may escape the policeman but cannot escape the life to come. When punishment in the shape of suffering and sorrow overtakes a man, wisdom lies in seeing the hidden hand of justice in it. There is no ground for complaint. We lie in the beds we have made for ourselves. We have therefore to endure our tribulations cheerfully and learn a lesson from them. In the same way also the good deeds we do take time to produce their results and we should not be greedy for quick returns.

If an upright man is not immediately rewarded or a wrongdoer enjoys a gay and prosperous life we need not feel frustrated or lose faith in *dharma*. The present misfortunes of the former and prosperity of the latter have both to be traced to antecedent causes. They must be attributed to the *karma* built up in a previous life, while what is done in the present lifetime will bear fruit in a future life. We have to take a long-range view, and faith in the law of causation compels us to posit a past as well as a future for man. Belief in past and future births is therefore a logical necessity.

Countless are the births we have already passed through, although we do not remember them. The physical brain, which is the seat of memory, is destroyed at death, and this accounts for the inability. There are some, however, who are able, to recall their past births. The *Upanishad* mentions the instance of Vamadeva. In the *Gita* the Lord says that he remembers his past births although ordinary people are not able to. We

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This does not prevent the intervention of a state of heaven or hell, since such state need not be subject to the physical time-scale. Sri Ramana Maharshi answered when asked about this: "If a man's merits and demerits are equal he is reborn immediately on earth; if the merits outweigh the demerits his subtle body goes first to heaven, while if the demerits outweigh the merits he goes first to hell. But in either case he is later reborn on earth. All this is described in the scriptures, but in fact there is neither birth nor death; one simply remains what one really is. That is the only truth." — (*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Page 573) — Ed.

*Br. Up., 1, IV. 10.*

*IV, 5.*
know in a general way that we have gone through previous periods of probation, though not in detail. The differences that we see between men in their intellectual and other attainments cannot be explained otherwise than by the *samskaras* which they derive from their past lives.

How many lives still await us we have no way of knowing. It depends on the amount of *karma* that has yet to be worked out. However this amount is not a fixed quantity but is constantly being exhausted from one side and added to from the other. Apart from the stock already accumulated (*sanchita karma*), there is that which is now being made (*agami karma*), so that by selfish activity we are creating new burdens for ourselves. In this way, when the *karma* to be worked off in this lifetime (*prarabdha karma*) is exhausted, its place is taken by another that has been accumulated, and so it goes on. It looks like a self-perpetuating, never-ending affair. Caught in its vortex, it looks as though we should be going round and round in an unending circle. Hindu writers generally compare the *jiva* transmigratory career to a limitless ocean, the ocean of *samsara*.

However, it can be both mitigated and brought to an end. The way of mitigating it is by regarding it as opportunities for self-purification and for getting rid of ingrained vices. These are deep-rooted and die hard. Long and continued discipline is necessary to eradicate them. The Lord says in the *Gita*: “If a yogi strives with diligence, he is cleansed of all his sins and, becoming perfect through many births, he reaches the Supreme State.” In another context He says: “At the end of many births the man who knows seeks refuge in Me, realising that Vasudeva is all.” Repeated births are not therefore to be regarded only as a punishment but also as opportunities for spiritual advancement.

The process of return can be accelerated by right knowledge of the Self. Such knowledge can bring the transmigratory career of the *jiva* (that is the ocean of *samsara*) to an end at one stroke. We emerge from the endless circle of *samsara* the moment we realise that the true Self of us has nothing to do with the causal body (*karana sarira*), subtle body (*sukshma sarira*) and physical body (*stula sarira*) that are caught in it. The pure Self has to be disengaged from its adventitious encumbrances. This can be effected at any moment. It lies with us. Only we must put in the required effort.

Thus, strange as it may seem, the Hindu doctrine of *karma* and reincarnation fills us with hope and resignation at the same time. With regard to the past, what we have done is done and is irrevocable. We must pay the penalty and accept the punishment in a spirit of resignation. But determinism ends here. So far as our future is concerned, it is entirely in our hands. We can make or mar it and there is no compelling reason why we should do the latter. It is a superficial view to suppose that we are the slaves of our past and that there is no getting out of it. The Lord says in the *Gita* that the *samskaras* come into

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18 VI, 45.
19 VII, 19.
Sri Bhagavan’s Instructions

By M.G. Shanmugam

Sri Bhagavan once said categorically, ‘For practising *atma vichara* everyday is auspicious and every moment is good — no discipline is prescribed at all. Any time, anywhere it can be done, even without others noticing that you are doing it. All other *sadhanas* require external objects and congenial environment, but for *atma vichara* nothing external to oneself is required. Turning the mind within is all that is necessary. While one is engaged in *atma vichara* one can with ease attend to other activities also. Besides, *atma vichara* being a purely internal movement, one does not also distract others who are around; whereas, in *sadhanas* like *puja*, others do notice you. One-pointed perseverance alone is essential in Self-enquiry and that is done purely inwardly, all the time. Your attention on the Self within alone is essential.’

Some of Bhagavan’s personal instructions to me were:

(i) If you observe the breathing one-pointedly such attention will lead you spontaneously into *kumbhaka* (retention) — this is *jnana pranayama*.

(ii) The more you humble yourself, the better it is for you, in all ways.

(iii) By withdrawing the mind within, you can live anywhere and under any circumstances.

(iv) You should look upon the world only as a dream.

(v) Do not allow your mind to be distracted by objective things and by thoughts. Except attending to your allotted duty-work in life, the rest of your time should be spent in *atma nishta*; do not waste even a second in inattention, lethargy.

(vi) Do not cause even the slightest hindrance or disturbance to others. Also, do all your work yourself.

(vii) Both likes and dislikes should be equally discarded and eschewed.

(viii) With attention focussed on the first person and on the heart within, one should relentlessly practise *Who am I?* When this is done one-pointedly, one’s breathing will subside of itself. During such controlled practice, the mind might suddenly spring up; so you have to vigilantly pursue the *vichara*, *Who am I?*

(ix) To remain silent without thoughts is the Whole; To remain without thoughts is *Nishta*; To remain without thoughts is *Jnana*; To remain without thoughts is *Moksha*; To remain without thoughts is *Sahaja*. Therefore, the state without any trace of thoughts is the final state of fullness, indeed!
Who Are We, Anyway?

By I.S. Madugula

One of the current fads in the West is genealogy. For the past decade or so, many people are frantically searching the library archives and national records to see if there is a king or queen or at least a major villain among their ancestors of whom they can be proud. They continue their research until they hit a famous name along the line.

In India until recently we were not even interested in our national history, let alone individual family histories, with few exceptions. Presumably, philosophical indifference to mundane events and material triumphs was responsible for this lack of respect for history per se.

The same indifference to mundane accomplishments and national vicissitudes however engendered in the Indian mind millennia ago a tremendous quest for the origins and the nature of the world. It would thus seem that the early Indians subordinated individual glorification to universal investigation. To put it another way, the Indians were interested in the ultimate genealogy, not just that of one family or one nation or even one species of beings. They wanted to know where everything and everybody in the universe came from. They inquired about the ultimate ancestor, the source:1 (janmady asya yatah).

Where did all this come from? How did it all start in the first place? They needed a name for this ultimate source, this first principle, and this origin of all origins. They called it Brahman, that which bursts forth, bubbles over, and keeps on growing.2 Naturally therefore the knowledge of Brahman is sacred, it is the First Principle, and there is nothing superior to or more ancient than that. One who knows Brahman knows everything and becomes Brahman. An inquiry into this Reality, brahma jijnasa, began in right earnest.

Definition of Brahman

The first thing to know about Brahman is that it is unknowable, in the usual sense of the term. If you can define something, you are circumscribing it, and Brahman is understood as everything you can think of and more. It is so full and all-encompassing that you cannot add to it or subtract from it or do any other arithmetical function on it. It remains whole, no matter how you modify it. Faced with an astounding situation like that, our philosophers took recourse to a process of elimination in referring to it, and

1 Vedanta Sutra, I.i.2.
2 Shankara derives the word from brhati (grows).
that of course is the well known neti, neti. In whatever way you attempt to define or describe, it is not that. It is always something over and above all categories, names, and forms. The one positive reference to Brahman always takes the form of something like “All this is Brahman.” Everything originates in it, continues in it, and submerges in it at the end. Therefore it is called taijalan, one who subsumes all three processes. There was, is, or will be nothing in existence that is apart from Brahman, though it is not affected by anything. “It has no beginning, end, or middle.” “And it is the goal of all things in existence, just as the ocean is the one goal of all bodies of water.”

Brahman and the Universe

No one knows what existed before creation. It could be sat, existence, or aat, non-existence. If it was non-existence, it was still within the purview of Brahman, who always existed. The scientists are no closer to solving this mystery, despite periodic claims to the contrary. Was it the “Big Bang” that produced this universe, or is it continuously expanding with matter (i.e. energy) being constant?

Or, can it be said to be in a “steady state,” meaning that “there is no uniquely distinctive pattern of temporal development in the universe as a whole that would distinguish earlier and later phases in its career, because at all epochs the universe appears essentially the same?”

Whenever and however the universe got created, all this is “enveloped by God” that is Hiranyagarbha who is connected to Brahman through the agency of Isvara which is the latter’s sakara (with form) aspect. “Though Brahman does not admit of any specifications, it is the root cause of the universe.” “Having created the universe, it entered into it, that is, it suffused it with its own effulgence.” “It is not only immanent in the creatures but also rules them.”

Brahman, the Supreme Being, or Isvara, or Hiranyagarbha, the “world egg,” or Prajapati, the creator, or the Ultimate Reality—or however we designate this First Principle—willed the world into existence. If this sounds too esoteric, one can say that the principle of creation inheres in Brahman and is eternally manifested, because creation is as endless as the Creator himself. Why Brahman manifests itself or what its relation to creation, is impossible to say. Sankara’s explanation is as enigmatic as the question: “Brahman is neither the cause nor non-cause nor both, and neither is it the instrument nor the adjunct nor both.”

The Individual and Atman

We have noted how Brahman or its energy manifested itself as the world. That en-
ergy or consciousness as it inhabits the body of a living being is *atman*, but only humans are capable of comprehending it based on reason and even realizing it. Having reasoned that there is something inside of him that energizes his body, mind, and intellect, the *Vedic* seer promptly asked, "Who is this *atman*?" and stipulated that it is that part of him that is not born and is not subject to death when the body dies, the *ajo bhagah*.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan observes:

There is an unborn and so immortal element in man, which is not to be confused with body, life, mind and intellect. These are not the self but its forms, its external expressions. Our true self is a pure existence, self-aware, unconditioned by the forms of the mind and intellect. When we cast the self free from all outward events, there arises from the inward depths an experience, secret and wonderful, strange and great. It is the miracle of self-knowledge, *atma-jnana*. . . the individual egos are the varied expressions of the One Universal Self."  

In Shankara's view, "the individual soul and *Brahman* are related as sparks to fire. The *jiva* partakes of, or is a reflection of, *Isvara.*"  

Shankara states that *"akasa* or ether, the element that is said to be present in all space in the universe, first emanated from the Supreme Self like foam from water. Furthermore, the world of name and form, which arose from this ether, is also different from the Supreme Self as foam differs from water. Foam is tainted with dirt, but clear water is not."  

The word *atman* is derived from *an*, to breathe, to signify that "atman is the very breath of life." Indeed, the *Veda* asserts as much. And it resides silently (*upasantah*) within us. The *Upanishad* claims that "an inquiry into the nature of the *atman* is very rewarding and leads one to the knowledge of the *atman*," Other *Upanishads* claim equally strongly that "this *atman* is verily the Supreme Self and that it pervades all creation." Shankara concludes that both scripture and reasoning clearly point out the unity of the individual and universal soul. The *Bible* also refers to the same genetic kinship of man to God in a number of passages.

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12 *Rig Veda*, I.164.4  
13 S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*, p.73.  
14 Shankara's commentary on *Vedanta Sutra*, II.iii.43.  
15 *Upadesa Sahasri*.  
16 *Rig Veda*, VII. 87.2.  
17 *Amsapurna Upanishad*, I.40.  
18 *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, III.iv.1; *Katha Upanishad*, III.12; *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, VI.11.  
19 By this we know that we dwell in Him and He in us, because he has given us of his spirit (John 4:13). I am He, I am the First, I am also the last (Isaiah 48:12); With my own hands I founded the earth; with my right hand I formed the expanse of the sky; when I summoned them, they sprang into being (Isaiah 48:13); And God said to Moses I AM WHO I AM (Exodus 3:14); The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools desire wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7); So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him (Genesis 5:1); In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God (Genesis 5:1): And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7); Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? (Malachi 2:10).
The Heart

Given that we intellectually understand the above genealogy, namely that we are the direct descendants of God, how do we turn this understanding into personal experience? Therein lies the rub. That is where we need saints like Sri Bhagavan to prove to us that it can not only be done, but also that the practice is within our reach. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa unequivocally declared that he saw God, which should significantly boost our confidence in spiritual matters.

Obviously, in order to receive God into our hearts, we must purify ourselves through various prescribed disciplines. Obviously, too, we are not here referring to the physical organ known as the heart but perhaps the faculty that is capable of intense perception and mystic identification with the divine. There may not be a single, actual location for this in the body, unless one identifies it with one of the plexuses or nerve centers. It plays a very important role in spiritual pursuit. As per the Upanishads,

...it is conceived of as a centre in the activity of the rishi, those seers who intuitively perceive the divine and express it in hymns. The heart is the secret place of their inspiration, where hymns are prepared to offer the gods, but it is also the critical authority that monitors the hymns' value. The heart thus becomes the place of divine vision, which is only given by grace to those who practise self-renunciation. It is understood that the heart's knowledge is satya, real and true, since it alone can enable one to pass from the unreal and illusory to the real.20

The heart therefore is the "symbol of divine inhabitation in man," "the place of passage from duality to unity, from formlessness to form, from unreal to the real."21 In fact, it is clearly stated that "Prajapati (the creator) is the same as the heart and also Brahma. It is all."22 Shankara defines heart here as the locus of intelligence.23

Sri Bhagavan confirms from personal experience that the spiritual heart is located in the right chest, but adds:

The Heart need not be taken to be the muscular cavity with four chambers which propels blood. There are indeed passages which support the view. There are others who take it to mean a set of ganglia or nerve centers about that region. Whichever view is correct does not matter to us. We are not concerned with anything less than ourselves. That we have certainly within us. There could be no doubts or discussions about that.24

22 Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, V.3.1.
23 hrdayastha buddir ucyate.
24 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, pp. 33-34. Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai (1996 Edn.).
Then he adds a very important note on the heart:

[It] denotes the place whence the notion ‘I’ springs. . .It springs within us somewhere right in the middle of our being. The ‘I’ has no location. Everything is the Self. . .so the Heart must be said to be the entire body of ourselves and the entire universe, conceived as ‘I’.\(^{25}\)

In short, it is *hṛt āyam*, the center “from which thoughts arise, on which they subsist and where they are resolved.” In the *Upanishad* we read that “in the space within the heart lies the Person comprising the mind, immortal and shining.”\(^{26}\) The *Bhajagovindam* of Shankara exhorts men to see the Lord in their hearts through self-control.\(^{27}\) Traditional daily prayers remind us of *hṛdayastho janardanah*, the deity within the heart. During the growth of the embryo, the heart claims primacy of origination: the heart is, so to speak, the first-born of the bodily organs and therefore deserves to be respected, even the physical heart.

Shankara also says:

In terms of spiritual practice, the Supreme Lord may be said to be in the heart in order to help meditation, just as an image is used in place of the deity during worship.\(^{28}\)

Sri Bhagavan says:

We know nothing about the other centers. We cannot be sure what we arrive at by concentrating on them and realizing them. But as the ‘I’ arises from the Heart, it must sink back and merge there for Self-realization.\(^{29}\)

In another context, he more precisely defines the heart as “That which is the source of all, that in which all live, and that into which all finally merge, is the heart. . .”\(^{30}\)

**Contemplation**

We have so far seen that we are descended from *Brahman* through *Isvara* — *Hiranyagarbha* — *Prajapati*, and that therefore we share in *Brahman* consciousness in the form of the individual self, *atman*. We have also noted that the locus of this *atman* is said to be the heart, as understood to be the whole personality, not just any single physical organ.

In terms of “practical Vedanta,” as Vivekananda would call it, the Lord is meditated upon as residing in the heart, that is, we have a location to focus upon in

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\(^{25}\) *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

\(^{26}\) *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 1.vi.1.

\(^{27}\) Verse 31.

\(^{28}\) Shankara on *Taittiriya Upanishad*.


\(^{30}\) Ibid., p 185.
spiritual practice. Intense contemplation (abhidhyana) of the Lord leads to identification with Reality. “This contemplation is introspection, an intimate worship, intuition of one’s own inner being... The embodied jiva becomes one with God.”  

In other words, man ascends to a higher, loftier state of consciousness through spiritual contemplation, this higher state being merely his original state which he has failed to remember on account of ignorance. The so-called higher states of consciousness are higher only with reference to the forgetting of one’s original connectivity with one’s roots. And the regaining of that connectivity leads to “enhanced powers of cognition” suggesting “human beings possess faculties beyond those of the ordinary mind for attaining certainty and wisdom.”

The 14th century mystic Meister Eckhart testifies to the fact that there is “a transcendent state in man, who is always in the presence of God,” in which he “experiences the kingdom of heaven within.” Heaven is an inner experience which . . . can be attained in this life when the mind becomes uncluttered and allows God to enter the soul. This requires diligence and attention wherein energy is not squandered on the outward person but is reserved for the inner person, the transformed being who knows God.  

Diligence is required because, “even though atman is ever present, owing to ignorance we don’t know it or experience it.” Thus the various techniques for contemplation and concentration, including correct bodily posture, proper place, proper diet, etc. have been enjoined on the spiritual practitioner.  

The Answer

We raised the question “Who are we?” in the title of this article. If, as we have shown above, our lineage goes all the way back to the Supreme Consciousness that is this world and the universe, then in the final analysis, we are that same Consciousness, Brahma. We are THAT, no less. Shankara says, “Jewellery made of gold always retains the quality of gold; beings descended of Brahma always retain the essence of Brahma.”

We often hear it proclaimed both by the smriti and by many saints that, “in this Age of Kali, the only way to salvation is nama japa, repetition of the holy name.” It is to the greater glory of Sri Bhagavan that by his own life he proved to us without a doubt that the first and original means to liberation, viz. Self-inquiry, is still within the reach of all of us, and that we can, through the cessation of our mental activity and by simply being our own uncovered selves, reach in and grasp our roots.  

31 Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 715. Reference is made to Svetasvatara Upanishad, (VI. 5.) and also II.14.


33 Ibid.

34 Shankara, Atmabodha, 44.

35 Aparokshanubhuti, 52.

36 Harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam, kalau nasti kalau nasti kalau nasti eva gati anyatha.
Sri Ramana’s Wondrous Grace

We received the following article very late in August (1946). In the covering letter, the “self-styled devotee” vouches for the truth of his writing. To save himself from some embarrassment, he has tried to hide himself behind an assumed title. We know him well. But we do not want to embarrass him either. This much, however, we must say, he is one of the contributors to this Souvenir and his article stands along with those of other devotees in the previous pages of this Volume. Really, the writer of “Sri Ramana’s Wondrous Grace” is a true devotee of Sri Bhagavan.

Below is his letter and then comes his article which, we are sure, will deeply interest the reader, who is the final judge for deciding things for himself. [Ed.]

Dear Sir,

I am sending you herewith an article. If it meets with your approval, it may be included in the Souvenir volume. As I have described here some experiences which should not be divulged to anybody else, I cannot publish my name. Kindly excuse me for this. I declare that the statements made are all true to my knowledge.

Whether you publish it or not, I request you to kindly place the article before Sri Bhagavan, so that He may remember me and take thought of me.¹

With pranams to Sri Bhagavan,

Yours sincerely

A self-styled devotee.

IT was on a cold afternoon of December that I found myself boarding the Madras Mail with a view to visit Sri Ramanasramam. For a couple of years previous to this, the intention of going on a pilgrimage to Sri Ramanasramam had been lurking in my mind now and then. A few months back, a strong urge came, and I made all arrangements for starting for the Ashram. Suddenly the news came that the East Coast was being...
bombed by the Japanese. I was dissuaded from going there at that time. A sense of frustration came over me, and the desire to go there sank within, leaving a vague resolve to visit the Ashram in December. December came, the expectation again floated in my mind but there was no agitation in it, as previous frustrations had made the mind somewhat resigned. However, a day was fixed and all arrangements were made for my departure. I was undecided and left everything to circumstances, and circumstances so moulded themselves that I found myself boarding the train for Madras on the next day.

The journey was uneventful. Though there was the usual war-time congestion in the trains, I was comfortably seated and also found sleeping accommodation at night. On the afternoon of the second day of the journey I picked up a companion; he expressed his intention to visit Ramanasramam to pay his respects to Maharshi and so we travelled together.

We reached Madras on the afternoon of the third day. On enquiry we were informed that a train would be just leaving the Egmore station for Villupuram, from where we would have to change for Tiruvannamalai, our destination. It was about midnight when we alighted at Villupuram. After some time the train came. It was not crowded at all and we two occupied one small compartment in it.

Ever since I came to know of Maharshi the thought of Arunachala had always been in my mind but it did not give rise to any strong emotion up till now. Only, the mind was in a gloomy mood. When we were a few stations from Tiruvannamalai the thought of a rebuff at the Ashram became very strong and roused a correspondingly strong emotion in me. As I was unobserved, my one companion being fast asleep and there being nobody else in the compartment, I gave free vent to my emotion. After some time it spent itself and the mind became resigned. The train now stopped at Tiruvannamalai. I roused my companion, who was still sleeping and we set our feet on the sacred soil of Tiruvannamalai.

It was already dawn and we came out of the station. The Hill of Arunachala now caught our eyes. Silent and majestic it stood there, as if immersed in deep meditation. We saluted the Jyotirlingam and drove direct to the Ashram.

It happened to be the annual birthday of Maharshi. Bhaktas were preparing to celebrate the day on a large scale. Huge preparations were being made for feeding a few thousand people and a big pandal was erected for the purpose.

At the farther end of the first quadrangle a small enclosure was erected and a seat was arranged there for Maharshi. Leaving a small space in front of the enclosure for the passage of pilgrims, the whole of the quadrangle was used for the occasion.
gle and the adjoining verandah were crowded with visitors.

Maharshi took his seat within the enclosure. Pilgrims came in a line, prostrated themselves before him, paid their respects and then passed out of the quadrangle. A continuous stream of people passed in this way for a couple of hours. I was all along anxious to catch his eyes but could not do so. When the crowd became thinner, I got up, walked up to the enclosure and took my stand just outside it, towards the right of Maharshi. With folded hands and tearful eyes I stood there, eagerly expecting to catch his eyes. Though some people were asked to pass on to make room for others, I was fortunately not disturbed. I continued standing there, allowing ample room for the free passage of other pilgrims who still continued to pass on. I waited and waited. Mixed emotions pulsed through the body and tears flowed down the cheeks (I know not why). My whole being was irresistibly being drawn towards him. At last he was turning his head, towards his right, that is, in my direction. Expectation rose high, but, alas, his gaze passed on without falling on me! Frustration further intensified my sense of helplessness and my whole being poured forth silent entreaty in convulsive sobs. Ah! now, immediately after, I seemed to obtain a side glance from his eyes, while a sweet smile beamed on his face. A peculiar sensation passed through my body and my whole being seemed to be churned. A minute later I passed out of the quadrangle.

The next morning I got up early, and after finishing my bath, attended the morning prayers in the hall. Well-versed brahmins recited Vedic Hymns. Some slokas offering homage to Maharshi were also recited. All these were done as routine work every morning and evening. After the prayers are over, all assemble in the dining hall and take their breakfast with Maharshi. Maharshi also takes the two principal meals along with all the guests. The same food as is served to Maharshi is also served to one and all present, and he does not allow any discrimination in this matter.

I was eager to put my case before Maharshi and tried to find out somebody who would introduce me to him and speak to him on my behalf. I approached some inmates of the Ashram but every one of them told me that no introduction or intermediary was necessary here — anyone could personally approach Maharshi and speak to him directly. But I could not muster sufficient courage to speak to him or rather I did not know what to speak to him. Thus the second day also passed away without my being able to make any contact with him. I had only a few days at my disposal, and two days had already gone. Would this journey, so much trouble and such a cost, would all these be for nothing? These thoughts overwhelmed me and goaded me to offer most earnest prayers.

Next morning I entreated another inmate of the Ashram to put my case before Maharshi. He looked at me for a moment, and then advised me to write down whatever I intended to say on a piece of paper and to place it before Sri Bhagavan. He also gave me a piece of paper. Write down! What should I write down? But I was not in a think-
The wise declare that there is only one Immutable Being. When you relinquish passions the One remains, the many disappear.

— Ashtavakra Gita I.22.

I had placed my case before Maharshi. He did not even speak to me; rather he laughed at me! There was nothing more to be done. I must return home and be a laughing stock also to my friends and relatives. What could be done? He could not be forced to bestow Grace. With these thoughts the mind became resigned.

After the night meal they used to spend half an hour in meditation in the hall in Maharshi’s presence. Mechanically I followed them and sat with them in the hall. A few minutes passed. Then suddenly I felt a pleasant coolness inundating me. It seemed to emanate from the very bones, cooling the whole being. Is this the spiritual fragrance spoken of as emanating from Maharshi? Whatever it might be, I had no doubt that it came from Maharshi and at his will.

This was on the night of the third day of my visit. On the next day, while sitting before Maharshi, I experienced a sudden pull in the region of the heart. I was astonished and, as I sought to observe it, it passed away. Nothing like the experience of the previous night was repeated. The remainder of the day passed in keen expectation, but nothing happened, even during the meditation period after the night meal. Perhaps expectation obstructed its manifestation.

Next morning, i.e., on the fifth day of my stay at the Ashram news came of further heavy bombing of the Eastern coastline by the Japanese, and I naturally became anxious for my family. Moreover, as I did not experience anything unusual during the meditation periods of the previous night and of that morning, I thought that I had obtained what I deserved and that nothing more would be gained by a further stay at the Ashram. So I decided to return home. In the afternoon I wrote out my intention to go home on a piece of paper and placed it before Maharshi. He read it, silently folded the paper and left it on the shelf. He spoke
nothing and did not even look at me. Another rebuff!

I made preparations for my departure, packed up my small belongings and after taking my evening meal requested an inmate of the Ashram to kindly get a carriage for me; but I was told that no carriage would be available at that hour. I should have informed him earlier so that one might have been fetched from the town. I was thus compelled to stay at the Ashram for another day.

Next morning I attended the usual prayers. I did not experience anything abnormal during the meditation period. Discussions generally take place when they assemble in the hall after breakfast. Maharshi also answers questions from earnest seekers. That morning also discussions were going on. As they were talking mostly in Tamil (a language not known to me) my attention was not attracted till I found some people turning their heads and laughing at me. On enquiry I learnt that they were discussing the subject matter of my first letter to Maharshi. Evidently, he had spoken something to them regarding this letter. Though made a laughing stock, I was still glad to find that he had at last taken notice of me. I took part in the discussions and, as I was in the back row, some distance away from them, they asked me to come nearer so that there might not be any difficulty in following each other, and I obeyed. I was thus brought very near Maharshi's seat. Our discussions over, I heard Maharshi say, "He is concentrating on the reflection and complains that he cannot see the original." It struck me forcefully. What did he mean by reflection and what was the original? I shut my eyes and tried to find out the meaning. Immediately after, I felt a pull in the region of the heart, similar to what I felt two days previously but much stronger in intensity. My mind was completely arrested — stilled, but I was wide awake. Suddenly, without any break in my consciousness, the "I" flashed forth! It was self-awareness, pure and simple, steady, unbroken and intensely bright, as much brighter than ordinary consciousness as is sunlight brighter than the dim light of a lamp. In ordinary consciousness the "I"-sense dimly remains in the background, — as a matter of inference or intuition, — the whole of the consciousness being occupied by the object. Here, 'I' came to the foreground, occupied, or rather became, the whole consciousness and intensely existed as pure consciousness, displacing all objects. I was, but I was neither the subject nor the object of this consciousness. I was this consciousness, which alone existed. There were no objects. The world was not, neither the body nor the mind — no thought, no motion; time also ceased to exist. I alone existed and that 'I' was consciousness itself, self-luminous and alone, without a second.... Suddenly, and again without any break in my consciousness, I was brought back to my normal, ordinary consciousness.

A great miracle had been performed in broad daylight in the presence of so many people, without their knowing it. No argument of the greatest philosophers and scientists of the world will now make me doubt
the possibility of experiencing the 'I' in its pure state or pure consciousness, without any subject-object relationship. Of course, I myself had not the least inkling of such a state even a second earlier, and I never expected to get such an experience. I, an insignificant creature, wallowing in the mud of mundane existence, and without any sadhana, being granted this supreme experience! — an experience which is rarely obtained even by great Yogis after austerest spiritual practices strenuously performed for ages together. Such is the wonder of His Grace! — immeasurable and unfathomable Grace! Truly has it been said, "Unasked Thou givest, this is Thy imperishable fame." As soon as I was brought to my normal consciousness, I opened my eyes and looked at Maharshi. I knew from the heart of my heart that it was Maharshi who had very graciously granted me this experience, but he appeared to be quite unconcerned, as if nothing had happened! He was not even looking at me! How could he have performed this miracle? Was it by his Silence? Is this then what is meant by — Through Silence is revealed the nature of Parabrahma by the Guru. Who can comprehend?

The experience so much amazed me that I even forgot to express my heartfelt gratitude to Maharshi. I could not at that time even properly evaluate this supreme experience. I looked at my comrades. They did not seem to notice me, and so were ignorant of what had happened. In like manner, unknown to others, to how many people has he graciously granted this and even higher experiences? He only knows. I looked at the clock, it was 20 minutes past ten. But as I did not look at the clock before this state supervened, I cannot say for how long I was in this wonderful state. A little later we followed Maharshi to the dining hall and took our meal.

The experience left a very cheerful mood in me. I felt completely carefree. The thought of home or of bombing did not trouble me any further and I thought of staying in the Ashram for a few days more. But man only proposes. Just after the night meal was over a certain gentleman came to me and said that he had already arranged a conveyance for me and a carriage was waiting for me at the gate to take me to the station! I was a little offended. Who asked him to bring a carriage? I had given up the idea of leaving the Ashram today. But why should I blame him? He was present on the previous night when I asked for a carriage and saw my plight at not being able to start home for want of a carriage. In order that the same thing might not happen again he had very kindly taken upon himself the duty of helping me by arranging for a carriage. How could he be aware of the change which had come over me? Moreover, he was only an instrument. I therefore said nothing to him. He took me to Maharshi, introduced me to him and explained to him that I was leaving for home. I prostrated myself before Maharshi, took leave of him and started for the station. The previous day I had decided to go but was compelled to stay; this day I decided to stay, but was compelled to go! Mysterious are his ways!
The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

It is highly beneficial for us to know at least the bare facts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus was without doubt the most influential religious teacher in the whole history of Western civilization. Jesus ministered only for three years, yet for more than two thousand years he has continued to shine as one of the brightest stars in the spiritual firmament. Few realise the importance of having an all-embracing spiritual outlook. Those who drink the waters of each and every well do not regress to insularity; on the contrary, they discover new spiritual dimensions never before imagined.

One can ignore the manmade doctrines and dogmas of the churches and concentrate instead on the authentic sayings of the Master. Let us shift the emphasis from churchianity to genuine Christianity.

Over the centuries various serious seekers have tried to delve into the life of Jesus. They at the very outset of their inquiry had to encounter the problem of sifting the available evidence. Differentiating between fact and fiction is by no means easy. Many indeed are the myths and legends that have grown around this revered personality. Who can be absolutely certain that the references to Jesus in the Bible are all correct down to the minutest detail?

When I read the Mahabharata or the Ramayana I do not care at all if these magnificent masterpieces are episodes from history. I have no interest whatsoever in finding out whether or not the events described therein really happened at various points in time. In any case, this question not only seems so trivial but is also overshadowed by the fact that these two great epics nicely exemplify Indian literature, philosophy, religion, ethics and spirituality at their very best.

From time to time commentators and scholars challenge the authenticity of the gospels. Was Jesus a historical figure or a fictitious character? Even if the story of Jesus’s life were pure invention, it does not matter, because it is the spiritual content and the timeless wisdom implicit in that remarkable story that are of the greatest value.

The writer of this article is not a Christian, but he has a highly reverential approach to the personality and overall message of Jesus, especially his esoteric teachings.

Scripture quotations are from the Gospel according to Matthew in the Good News Bible published by the Bible Society in Australia, a American Bible Society. Used by permission.
‘Jesus’ and ‘Christ’ mean respectively ‘the Lord is salvation’ and ‘the Lord’s anointed one’. Scriptural phrases such as ‘his people’ are often narrowly interpreted. If Jesus were no more than the mere saviour of a particular race or religious group, then his message has no universal applicability. We do Jesus an injustice by saying that his teaching is exclusively for Jews or Christians when, in fact, it is addressed to all nations.

Jesus is one of several saviours of mankind. The Hindu view with its characteristic catholicity is that Jesus is not the one and only Messiah but one of several divine avatars or incarnations of the Supreme. We must therefore trace the spiritual lineage of Jesus back many centuries not only to the preceding Hebrew prophets but also to Krishna, Zarathustra and the Buddha. To this group of exalted luminaries one can add the names of latter-day avatars such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.

Sri Krishna says, “When spirituality is weak and materialism is widespread, then, O Arjuna, my Spirit reincarnates on earth.”

“Jesus ... to me is a great world teacher among others,” stated Mahatma Gandhi, “because I regard him as one among the many begotten sons of God. The adjective ‘begotten’ has, for me, a deeper and possibly a grander meaning than its literal meaning. For me, it implies spiritual birth. In his own times, he was the nearest to God.”

Birth of Jesus

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus were most extraordinary. His loving parents Joseph and Mary had been engaged to be married, yet before they came together, it was discovered that Mary was pregnant. Surprised, Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly as he did not want the public to hold her in low esteem. The poor man was carefully assessing his embarrassing situation when a divine angel visited him in a dream and said: “Joseph ... do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus — because he will save his people from their sins.” Significantly, centuries before Jesus's birth, the Prophet Isaiah who lived in the 8th century B.C. foretold that there would be a son born of a virgin mother and he would be called Immanuel or “God with us”. Often in Christian exegeses this boy is thought to be Jesus. However, the non-Christian world, not attaching much importance to these supernatural events, has tended to evaluate Jesus on his own merits.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Judaea) when Herod the Great was king of the Roman province of Judaea.

The Three Wise Men

Such was their great devotion that the Magi (Wise Men) came to Jerusalem and inquired as to the whereabouts of the child: “Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in

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1 Bhagavad Gita, 4:7.
On hearing this, King Herod was deeply troubled for he started regarding Jesus as a rival. Thereafter an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and advised him to flee to Egypt, taking with him both Jesus and Mary, because Herod was planning to kill Jesus. The family acted accordingly and they all escaped under cover of darkness.

Herod ordered the slaughter of all boys who were two years old or under in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood in order to make certain that the infant Jesus's life would also end. No sooner had the life of Jesus begun than they were plotting to murder him! Yet angels were his protection. Out of concern for the boy’s safety, it was only after Herod’s death that an angel appeared in a dream to Joseph and asked him to take his family back to Israel. Now they were out of harm’s way. Once again following angelic instruction, they settled down in Nazareth and not in dangerous Judaea where Archelaus, the son of Herod, was reigning.

**Baptism by John**

John the Baptist was preaching in the desert. A colourful figure wearing clothes made of camel’s hair and living on locusts and wild honey, John was heralding the advent of Jesus. People were confessing their sins and he baptised them in the River Jordan.

Because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand it is necessary to repent of our sins. John said: “I baptize you with water to show that you have repented, but the one who will come after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He is much greater than I am; and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals.” Such was John’s humility.

Water is symbolically associated with both physical and psychological purity. Perform religious rituals of purification if you must, but such deeds have a deeper meaning only when it is realised that real purity consists in cleansing oneself of every form of egoism such as pride, jealousy, anger or spite.

Jesus went to John for baptism. What happened on that occasion was truly phenomenal.

As Jesus emerged from the waters of the Jordan the heavens opened and he noticed the Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. Then a heavenly voice said: “This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased.” The dove in Western art is the pictorial representation of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s presence is accompanied by a host of virtues such as peace, love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness.

**The Temptation of Christ**

The Spirit led Jesus into the desert with the intention of getting him tempted by the Devil. It seemed like a test of his character and spiritual strength. When Jesus was suffering from hunger after fasting there for forty days and nights, the Devil mockingly asked him to turn the stones into bread. Quoting scripture, Jesus replied that “Man cannot live on bread alone, but needs every word that God speaks.” Physical nourishment alone is not enough: we need spiritual food also. Next, the Evil One dared Jesus to
Jesus Christ (From Sinai — 6th century)
throw himself down from the highest point of the Temple, for scripture says that God will command his angels to hold him up safely with their hands. Quoting scripture once again, Jesus said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” No tests become necessary when there is unshakeable faith. Thereupon the Devil tried to strike a deal with Jesus who was taken to a very high mountain and shown all the kingdoms of the world. Satan promised him the ownership of all these kingdoms if only Jesus would kneel down and worship him! But Jesus turned down the offer, saying, “Go away, Satan! The scripture says, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” Before driving away the Evil One, Jesus referred to the scriptures several times. Evidently he was well versed in them. It is remarkable that Jesus was not tempted by the prospect of enjoying worldly wealth and its attendant power and glory.

The instruction to worship the Lord and serve only Him implies an absolute commitment to the Absolute; it is also an injunction not to worship any persons other than the Supreme, whether it be an angel or a saint or a priest. Jesus was uncompromisingly monotheistic.

Twelve apostles were specially chosen by Jesus to spread his message. Some of them like Simon (called Peter) and his brother Andrew used to catch fish. When Jesus said “Come with me, and I will teach you to catch men”, they immediately left their nets and joined him. They were drawn magnetically to the master.

Some of his admirers sincerely believed in Jesus’s teachings and tried their best to live according to them. Jesus went to different parts of Galilee and preached in synagogues. He became a celebrity in Syria and he healed the sick and the suffering, including demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics. Greatly impressed by Jesus, large crowds followed him from place to place.

The Sermon on the Mount

After noticing the crowds, Jesus climbed a hill and sat down. Surrounded by his disciples, he started discoursing on various topics. One can discover in this long sermon the very essence of his teaching. Over the centuries many a meditative monk has committed these lines to memory as part of his sadhana. Here are some excerpts from a speech that has long been regarded as one of the most valuable contributions to religious literature:

Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!

Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them!

Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised!

Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully!

Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!

Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God!
Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children!
Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!

Happy are you when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers.

Be happy and glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted.

Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them, but to make their teachings come true.

If you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God.

You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But now I tell you: anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her is guilty of committing adultery with her in his heart.

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies.' But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

You must be perfect — just as your Father in heaven is perfect!

Make certain you do not perform your religious duties in public so that people will see what you do.

When you help a needy person, do it in such a way that even your closest friend will not know about it. Then it will be a private matter. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them. But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.

When you pray, do not use a lot of meaningless words, as the pagans do, who think that God will hear them because their prayers are long. Do not be like them. Your Father already knows what you need before you ask him.

Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. For your heart will always be where your riches are.
No one can be a slave of two masters; he will hate one and love the other; he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Do not start worrying: ‘Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?’ (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.

Do not give what is holy to dogs — they will only turn and attack you. Do not throw your pearls in front of pigs — they will only trample them underfoot.

Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find, knock, and the door will be opened to you.

Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets.

Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few people who find it.

Be on your guard against false prophets; they come to you looking like sheep on the outside, but on the inside they are really like wild wolves. You will know them by what they do.

Impressed and amazed at the way Jesus taught, the crowd followed him as he walked down the hill. Then a man suffering from a terrible skin disease knelt before Jesus and asked for help. Jesus touched the man and he was immediately healed.

Calming the Storm

Once in a lake there was a fierce storm when Jesus and his disciples were going in a boat. Deeply troubled by the possibility that they might drown, the disciples woke up Jesus who was asleep. They implored him to save them. Jesus remarked: “Why are you so frightened? ... How little faith you have!” Soon afterwards Jesus ordered the storm to stop. Then it became very calm. Marveling at this deed, they said that even the winds and waves obeyed Jesus.

Healing the Sick

There was a woman who had been bleeding severely for a period of twelve years. Great was her suffering. One day she went behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak while telling herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will get well.” Seeing her, Jesus said: “Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well.” Immediately her illness disappeared. This happening is enough to demonstrate the power of devotion to effect miraculous cures. When the heart is full of bhakti what is not possible?

The Jewish Sabbath is Saturday which is their day of rest when no work should be
done. Some do not even light a fire in their homes on this day that should be kept holy. On the Sabbath Jesus went to a synagogue and saw a man with a paralysed hand. He asked the man to stretch out his hand. Accordingly this person stretched it out and he became well again. Because he had healed someone on the Sabbath the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus. He was already rocking the boat and beginning to unsettle the religious Establishment.

**Excorcism**

Let us examine the case of the poor man who was both blind and dumb because he had a demon. He was brought to Jesus who exorcised him of the evil spirit; consequently, he was able to see and talk and the crowds were amazed. Yet the Pharisees scoffed at Jesus by saying: “He drives out demons only because their ruler Beelzebul gives him power to do so” (‘Beelzebul’ refers to the prince of devils — Satan) “No, it is not Beelzebul,” corrected Jesus, “but God’s Spirit, who gives me the power to drive out demons, which proves that the Kingdom of God has already come upon you ... Anyone who says something against the Son of Man can be forgiven; but whoever says something against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven — now or ever.” The preceding quotation is significant because Jesus makes a clear distinction between the Son of Man and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was the source of his powers; the Spirit provided the inspiration for his words of wisdom; Jesus became a special spokesman for the Spirit, though not the sole one. On account of the fact that Jesus was only the agent of the Spirit and not the Spirit per se, the Bible has correctly and metaphorically described him as the Son of God. He was clearly the Son and not the Father. Worship the divine if you must, but why worship Jesus? Jesus himself worshipped God because he never lost sight of his subordinate status in relation to the Supreme.

**Parables of Jesus**

Jesus told interesting parables to illustrate profound truths. These narratives, short though they were, have hidden meanings that are not immediately obvious. The following is fairly typical of his parables: “The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man is looking for fine pearls, and when he finds one that is unusually fine, he goes and sells everything he has, and buys that pearl.” What is its meaning? When a man comes by that priceless pearl all other possessions seem utterly valueless. He regards his riches as nothing more than mere trinkets. The Highest alone matters: nothing else does. He renounces the world with all its attractions. Thereafter he dedicates all his time and energy, indeed his very life, to the Nameless.

**The Miracle of the Loaves**

Once there was an enormous crowd that had to be fed. Jesus felt great pity for them. Jesus took the only food available — five loaves and two fish — looked up to heaven and rendered thanks to God. He proceeded to break the loaves and gave them to his disciples who in turn handed out the food to the hungry onlookers. Suddenly more than
five thousand persons had enough to eat! Equally miraculous is the account of how Jesus started walking on water. He walked towards his disciples who were in a boat that was far out in a lake. Their boat had tossed about because of the stormy weather. The sight of Jesus walking on water filled them with fear. They screamed, believing that it was a ghost! Peter alighted from the boat and tried to walk towards Jesus but the strong wind gave him a scare. There was the possibility of drowning in water. “Save me, Lord!” Peter cried. Instantly Jesus grabbed Peter and came to his rescue. Jesus said: “How little faith you have! Why did you doubt?”

Jesus admonished Peter for his lack of faith. If Peter had had more bhakti he would, by implication, have succeeded in walking on water. Because Peter had not been overpowered by the Spirit he was lacking in faith on the one hand, and because he was lacking in faith the Spirit did not overpower him on the other. It was a vicious circle.

Meaning of Cleanliness

Some Pharisees and teachers of the Law from Jerusalem complained to Jesus that his disciples disobeyed the teaching handed down by their ancestors. Why did they fail to wash their hands in the proper way before eating? Jesus replied that “It is not what goes into a person’s mouth that makes him ritually unclean; rather, what comes out of it makes him unclean ... the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these are the things that make a person ritually unclean. For from his heart come the evil ideas which lead him to kill, commit adultery, and do other immoral things; to rob, lie, and slander others. These are the things that make a person unclean. But to eat without washing your hands as they say you should — this doesn’t make a person unclean.”

What exactly is uncleanliness? In this present period, which is called Kali Yuga, the principal pursuits of people are centred around power, politics, possessions, pride and promiscuity, which means that they do not put a very high premium on spiritual progress. Nowadays very few are interested in purging their minds and hearts of ugly personality traits such as selfishness, hate, spite, envy and violence (both physical and verbal). Passing physical pleasures are overrated and the emphasis is hardly on living according to strict moral principles. Puritan values are spurned. The very word “purity” is used in a pejorative sense. Yet it is necessary to realise that purity is the ABC of spirituality. Without it we will degenerate and revert to the dark ages. Without it we will also fail to transcend our beastly psychological traits that can be traced back to our primitive past. Let us therefore reiterate one of the beatitudes pronounced by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount — “Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God!” Purity of heart, in fact, is synonymous with God-consciousness or Self-realisation: “Brahman,” declared Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, “is the Heart ... The Self is the Heart”

3 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, p.93 (1978 Edn.).
Jesus's disciples failed to heal a boy who was suffering from epilepsy. So terrible were his fits that he often fell into water or fire. But Jesus drove out the offending demon and at that very moment the patient was healed. Then the disciples met Jesus privately and inquired why they had been unsuccessful. "It was because you haven't enough faith," answered Jesus. "I assure you that if you have faith as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this hill, 'Go from here to there!' and it will go. You could do anything!" One can surmise that the distinguishing characteristic of Jesus was his unwavering faith or devotion to the Divine.

The Eternal Life

A rich young man asked Jesus what good things he must do to receive eternal life. Jesus's answer was brief, "If you want to be perfect go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me." Disappointed, the wealthy questioner went away.

This answer has a number of implications. First, the renunciation of riches is the prelude to perfection. Prince Siddharta Gautama renounced his kingdom and became a wandering ascetic — a venture that culminated in the attainment of Nirvana. Giving away one's earthly possessions to the needy is comparatively easy, but the state of freedom from all craving is far more difficult to achieve; second, acts of generosity should be done with total indifference to the fruits of action — without expectation of any reward either in this life or the hereafter; third, "riches in heaven" can be interpreted as the great sense of relief and the inner serenity that is experienced by all genuine renunciants, especially because the Kingdom of God is within us, not hidden somewhere in outer space; fourth, since it is possible to live happily with a bare minimum of possessions, the accumulation of vast amounts of money and various material possessions is quite contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

Entry into Jerusalem

Accompanied by his disciples, Jesus went to Jerusalem. His triumphant entry into that ancient city was cheered by the crowds. They obviously admired and respected the great teacher because they spread their cloaks on the road and decorated it with branches from the trees. As Jesus arrived riding on a donkey, they shouted, "God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise God!" However, the whole city was in an uproar. "Who is he?" some asked. "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee," the crowds answered. The available evidence suggests that despite all the praise showered on Jesus, there were some who regarded him with a certain suspicion. In fact hatred towards him was brewing because Jesus was deviating from time-honoured Jewish principles and practices. Besides, he was given to expressing himself forcefully. His forthright manner might have created the impression that the man was quick-tempered. People were having mixed feelings about Jesus.

While faithfully upholding the Jewish Law on the one hand, Jesus was giving unortho-
dox interpretations of it on the other. The powers-that-be could have ignored altogether the presence of Jesus in their midst and dismissed him as an eccentric. But it was not possible for them to treat Jesus with complete indifference as he not only performed miracles but also healed. In addition, he was referring to himself as the Son of God. Jesus's radicalism made himself unacceptable, yet his inherent holiness qualified him for acceptance. They were on the horns of a dilemma.

Behaving like an audacious disciplinarian, Jesus went into the Temple and chased out those who were buying and selling. Is the Temple a market place for money-making? Jesus proceeded to overturn the tables of the money-changers and the stools of merchants who were selling pigeons. Accusing them of desecrating the Temple, Jesus said: “It is written in the Scriptures that God said, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer’. But you are making it a hideout for thieves!” Within the Temple he also healed the blind and the crippled who came to meet him. All these happenings, needless to say, angered the chief priest and the teachers of the Law who were all overshadowed by the towering spirituality of Jesus.

A teacher of the Law posed the following question: “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it, ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself’.” These marvellous sayings speak for themselves and any elaboration of them will be like gilding the lily. Interestingly, these teachings on love corroborate those of that great son of India who lived in the 6th century before Christ — Gautama the Buddha, “O let us live happily, let us live in love even amongst those who hate! Amidst those who hate, let us live in love”.

Some statements in the Bible have hidden meanings. The following saying of Jesus is a case in point: “Whoever makes himself great will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be made great”.

The vast majority seek fame and fortune, valuing glory and honour in all their activities throughout life. Instead of remaining indifferent to the fruits of our actions, we try to excel in whatever we do merely in order to boost our egos. The ego is insatiable for it persistently craves for power, position and prestige. The ego is like a balloon, just a plaything of no particular importance. When a child blows up his balloon it keeps on expanding. The larger it grows the greater are the chances of its bursting. Sooner or later the toy bursts and gets torn into shreds. Similarly, when our egos burst we are humiliated and reduced to a state of nothingness. “Whoever makes himself great will be humbled,” taught Jesus. In contrast, the man who has abandoned his ego is truly great precisely because he always abides in the Self.

* The Dhammapada. 15:197.
Jesus Christ (Moscow School — 17th century)
Exposing the Hypocrites

Much to their annoyance, Jesus criticised the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees, denouncing them as hypocrites and even calling them blind guides, snakes and sons of snakes. Relations between Jesus and these people were becoming very strained. Why did Jesus find them so objectionable? They are responsible, he said, for locking the door to the Kingdom of heaven in people's faces; they fail to follow the important teachings relating to justice, mercy and honesty; outwardly they appear to be good but inwardly they are hypocritical and sinful. Jesus was in the depths of despair when he uttered the following famous lines: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times have I wanted to put my arms round all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me! And so your Temple will be abandoned and empty. From now on, I tell you, you will never see me again until you say, 'God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Jesus said that Jerusalem will never again see him until they regard him as God's messenger. Will that prophecy ever be fulfilled? Only time will tell.

As Jesus was leaving the Temple of the Jews his disciples drew his attention to its buildings. "Not a single stone here," remarked Jesus, "will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down." Jesus prophesied rightly, for the Romans destroyed the Temple in AD 70.

Jesus had a premonition of his imminent death. He even told his disciples that in two days' time he would be handed over to be crucified. The chief priests and the elders made preparations to arrest him in secret and put him to death, but they thought that it must not be done during the Passover Festival lest the people riot.

While Jesus was eating inside a house in Bethany, a woman with a jar of expensive perfume came to him and started pouring the perfume on his head. Apparently it was a gesture of her great affection and devotion. Annoyed, the disciples complained that she was wasting the expensive perfume when it could have been sold and the proceeds distributed to the poor. Thereupon Jesus declared: "Why are you bothering this woman? It is a fine and beautiful thing that she has done for me. You will always have poor people with you, but you will not always have me. What she did was to pour this perfume on my body to get me ready for burial. Now, I assure you that wherever this gospel is preached all over the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Betrayal by Judas

The infamous Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the chief priest. "What will you give me," he asked, "if I betray Jesus to you?" They then gave the traitor thirty silver coins for services yet to be rendered. Thereafter Judas was on the lookout for a suitable opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.
While Jesus and his disciples were partaking of their festival meal he remarked that "one of you will betray me". Understandably perturbed, the disciples started saying "Surely, Lord, you don't mean me?" Jesus replied, "One who dips his bread in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man will die as the Scriptures say he will, but how terrible for that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would have been better for that man if he had never been born!" "Surely, Teacher, you don't mean me?" interrupted Judas. "So you say," answered Jesus knowingly. Then the master took a cup, thanked the Divine, and passed it round. "Drink it, all of you. This is my blood," he said, emphasising the special symbolic significance of this last get-together with his beloved disciples. "I tell you," continued Jesus, "I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in my Father's Kingdom." 'Drink the new wine' is a metaphorical reference to experiencing the exalted state of divine bliss (Ananda) that is in store for those who manage to enter the Father's Kingdom — Self-Realisation. Then after singing a hymn they went to the Mount of Olives.

The bad behaviour of some followers is no reflection on their Teacher. Jesus was much disillusioned with his own disciples; he told them quite categorically that they will all run away and desert him. Jesus was able to foretell that Peter would be untruthful! Jesus said to Peter: "I tell you that before the cock crows tonight, you will say three times that you do not know me." But Peter and all of them assured Jesus that they would never say such a thing even it they have to die with him. Peter's words were strong: his deeds, weak.

Along with his disciples, Jesus went to Gethsemane. There he asked them to remain seated while he went elsewhere to pray, taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. It was a welcome respite before the terrible ordeal. Griefstricken and anguished, Jesus said: "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me." Throwing himself on the ground with his face downwards, Jesus prayed: "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me! Yet not what I want, but what you want." Jesus is not only infused with human emotions and hence desires to live, but also with the Divine Spirit. He resolves the difficulty by allowing his will to be superseded by that of the Divine, thus attaining the state of unconditional surrender to the Divine.

On returning to his three disciples, Jesus found them all asleep. Jesus addressed some remarks to Peter, "How is it that you three were not able to keep watch with me even for one hour? Keep watch and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Then for the second time Jesus went away to pray: "My Father, if this cup of suffering cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done." When he returned to his disciples, once again they had fallen into a slumber. For the third time Jesus left them and went away to pray. After coming back Jesus said, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look! The hour has
come for the Son of Man to be handed over to the power of sinful men. Get up, let us go. Look, here is the man who is betraying me!” Judas, accompanied by people armed with swords and clubs, suddenly appeared on the scene. They were there at the instigation of the chief priests and the elders. Judas said, “Peace be with you, Teacher” and proceeded to kiss Jesus! They immediately arrested Jesus for Judas had previously instructed them to arrest the person whom he was going to kiss. Provoked by this frightful situation, Peter used a sword to cut off the right ear of the high priest’s servant. But Jesus touched the injured man and he was healed. “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus scolded Peter, “all who take the sword will die by the sword.” It is noteworthy that Jesus upheld the noble ideal of ahimsa (non-violence) even when his enemies were closing in for killing him. The wise saying that those who take the sword will perish by the sword is the very basis of pacifism; great men like Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King were considerably influenced by this particular teaching of Jesus.

Jesus talked with the hostile crowd, “Did you have to come with swords and clubs to capture me, as though I were an outlaw? Every day I sat down and taught in the Temple, and you did not arrest me. But all this has happened in order to make what the prophets wrote in the Scriptures come true.” Jesus was obviously resigned to his fate; in other words, he realised that he must passively accept what had been preordained, even when it is unacceptable and entails a lot of suffering. The principal events in his life and his unique destiny had all been foretold by the prophets. In a sense Jesus was like an actor who has to play the role of Messiah in this great drama of human history. Jesus was conscious of his special role that would involve himself in various trials and tribulations as well as agonizing pain. Soon we shall see how Jesus fared. Interestingly, some saints like Swami Ramdas (1884-1963) used to take suffering in their stride. Often Ramdas was joking, smiling or laughing when there were great personal crises in his life, simply saying that such events were all part of the Lord’s leela.

Before the High Priest

Jesus was taken to the house of the High Priest where the teachers of the Law and the elders had gathered. Hellbent on condemning Jesus to death, they searched for some false evidence against him, but they failed to find any, although many made statements that were completely untrue. Two men complained, “This man [i.e. Jesus] said ‘I am able to tear down God’s Temple and three days later build it up again’.” When Jesus was asked if he had any answer to give in defence concerning this accusation, Jesus remained silent. Then the High Priest said: “In the name of the living God I now put you on oath: tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

“So you say,” replied Jesus, “but I tell all of you: from this time on you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right of the Almighty and coming on the clouds of heaven!”
“Blasphemy!” said the High Priest, “we don’t need any more witnesses! You have just heard his blasphemy! What do you think?” They responded that he was guilty and must therefore die. Next they spat in Jesus’s face. He was also slapped and beaten.

**Trial by the Roman Governor**

Jesus was put in chains and handed over to Pilate, the Roman governor. When Judas heard what had happened, he repented, threw the silver coins down in the Temple and went away. Tortured by feelings of guilt, Judas hanged himself. It is not clear why exactly one of his twelve disciples betrayed Jesus. Judas probably felt jealous of Jesus’s towering spirituality and his own inability to be the equal of his master, let alone surpass him. The strange behaviour of Judas might also have been motivated by the suspicion that Jesus was an impostor or a false prophet. The lure of money might not have been the sole reason why the man turned traitorous.

Pilate, the Roman colonial governor, asked a simple question: “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“So you say,” was Jesus’s curt reply. He answered cleverly and noncommittally: if he had answered in the affirmative, it would have annoyed the chief priests and elders who were quite opposed to regarding Jesus as the Messiah; if he had answered in the negative, it would have cast doubts on whether Jesus was in fact the Son of God. Besides, claims to Kingship might have upset Pilate. Jesus received the accusations of the chief priests and elders in dignified silence. His refusal to answer their allegations greatly surprised the governor.

At the annual Passover Festival it used to be the practice of the Roman governor to set free any one prisoner chosen by the crowd. This habit might have to some extent helped the rulers to appease the ruled, for the Jews were a subject people at that time. So there was a remote possibility of Jesus becoming a free man again. As it happened, there was another well-known prisoner called Jesus Barabbas. Therefore Pilate posed the following difficult question for the crowd to decide: “Which one do you want me to set free for you? Jesus Barabbas or Jesus called the Messiah?”

Pilate’s wife sent him a message while he was seated in the judgement hall: “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, because in a dream last night I suffered much on account of him.” She was trying to use her influence with Pilate to get Jesus freed. The chief priests and the elders, however, were pressurising the crowd to ask Pilate not only to set Barabbas free but also to have Jesus condemned to death.

Pilate asked the crowd, “Which one of these two do you want me to set free for you?”

“Barabbas!” they answered.

“What, then, shall I do with Jesus called the Messiah?” Pilate asked them.

“Crucify him!” they all answered.

But Pilate asked: “What crime has he committed?”
Then at the top of their voices they shouted in unison:

"Crucify him!"

Pilate realised that it was almost impossible to overcome the tide of hatred for Jesus. With much regret he took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying “I am not responsible for the death of this man! This is your doing!” It was a gesture whereby Pilate publicly absolved himself from all blame.

The crowd responded: “Let the punishment for his death fall on us and our children!” Poor Jesus was whipped and handed over to be crucified.

The so-called trial of Jesus was manifestly unfair and unjust. There was no counsel for the defence. Jesus was left to defend himself. He spoke very little. Neither a panel of learned judges nor a carefully chosen jury heard the case. The fate of Jesus was decided not by Pilate but by an unruly mob that played the role of jury. Had the Roman rulers been sincerely interested in saving the life of Jesus they surely could have freed him then and there. They preferred instead to bow to the will of the mob that had been manipulated by the high priests and elders.

The Crucifixion

Imagine what it must be like if the body is fastened to a wooden cross and nails hammered into it so that one slowly bleeds to death! The ensuing physical and mental agony is truly inconceivable unless it is personally experienced. Before he died on a cross, perhaps in order to make Jesus appear silly and funny, there was above his head a written notice: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” That was their cruel accusation against him. Onlookers hurled insults at Jesus. The chief priests and the elders jeered at him, “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! Isn’t he the king of Israel? If he comes down off the cross now, we will believe in him! He trusts in God and claims to be God’s Son. Well, then, let us see if God wants to save him now!” Two bandits were also crucified at the same time, one on the right of Jesus and the other on his left. These bandits also made offensive remarks as the enemies of Jesus had done.

The whole country was suddenly shrouded in a strange darkness that lasted for three hours from noon. Shortly before he passed away around three o’clock, Jesus shouted out these famous last words; “My God, my God, why did you abandon me?” Was Jesus complaining that the Holy Spirit had ceased to operate through him? Did he suddenly lose faith in the Lord? This statement of Jesus can be interpreted in many ways. It ceases to be enigmatic if we listen to Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi who has provided the explanation.

When Major A. W. Chadwick, an ardent English devotee of Bhagavan, asked the following intriguing question: “Why did Jesus call out ‘My God! My God!’ while being crucified?”

Ramana Maharshi answered:

It might have been an intercession on behalf of the two thieves who were cruci-
fied with Him. Again a jnani has attained liberation even while alive, here and now. It is immaterial as to how, where and when he leaves his body. Some jnanis may appear to suffer, others may be in samadhi, still others may disappear from sight before death. But that makes no difference to their jnana. Such suffering is apparent only to the onlooker and not to the jnani, for he has already transcended the mistaken identity of the Self with the body.

After Jesus had breathed his last some extraordinary things happened: “The curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split apart, the graves broke open, and many of God’s people who had died were raised to life... When the army officer and the soldiers with him who were watching Jesus saw the earthquake and everything else that happened, they were terrified and said, ‘He really was the Son of God!’” The Bible conveys the terrifying atmosphere that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of the crucifixion. Even mother nature and the elements were shaken by an event that robbed mankind of one of its holiest men.

**Summing up**

With the benefit of hindsight it is easy to speculate that Jesus should not have remained in his country, given the risk to his life, but should have opted for self-imposed exile in a safer country such as Egypt. His loving parents had once taken the infant Jesus to Egypt, fleeing from Herod’s slaughter of the innocents. Jesus realised that it was impossible to avoid the tragic end that awaited him for that was what the scriptures had foretold.

Those who study the Bible carefully cannot fail to be impressed by the fact that Jesus was very well versed in the Jewish scriptures. When it came to knowing and understanding them, he was unequalled. His profound understanding of the scriptures and the prophecies were lost on all the rabbis of his day. They became jealous of his greatness and spirituality. Instead of having admiration for Jesus they detested him.

Many of the events in his life had to be lived in accordance with prophecy. So it was as though Jesus were an actor who was required to play his preordained role in the divine drama that was his life.

Numerous are the theories relating to the crucifixion. Why did Jesus have to die in such sad circumstances? That is not an easy question to answer. The crucifixion was probably the means whereby he was exhausting his prarabdha karma.

The life of Jesus demonstrates the manifestation of divine love at its highest, and the manner of his demise shows, in contrast, what human nature is at its most wicked. This juxtaposition of spiritual perfection on the one hand and human depravity on the other can be seen as a lesson for us all — the purpose of our lives should be to aspire to the former by transcending the latter.

The rationale behind the crucifixion is difficult to discover because it remains a

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1 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, p. 88.
mystery. Why was so noble a soul crucified as though he were an incorrigible criminal? But is that a right question? Who are we to sit in judgment and tell the Lord that he has acted unfairly? It is not for us to impose our man-made standards of justice on those of the Divine. Is the human mind with all its limitations capable of comprehending the hidden workings of the Divine mind? The true mystic, instead of having a grudge against the Divine, surrenders himself to the will of the Supreme, unquestioningly accepting even what seems to be injustice, and above all, trusting always in the loving-kindness of the Divine towards us. It is the prerogative of the Divine to do what He likes, ignoring altogether what we like. Nowadays people demonstrate when their civil, political or human rights are violated. The Divine, let us not forget, is the Creator; we are only the created. It may seem like a gross injustice, but the truth of the matter is that we, the created, have no right whatsoever, to complain about or protest against any act of the Creator. Surrendering to the Divine unreservedly, as Jesus did, is all that we mortals can do.

Some of the early Christians did not subscribe to the belief that Jesus was crucified. The Basilidans maintained that somebody else was crucified instead of Jesus. The Docetae were of the opinion that Jesus never had a physical body; he only had an apparent or phantom body: hence the crucifixion only seemed to be real but never happened. *The Marcionite Gospel* (circa AD 138) not only denied the birth of Jesus but also stated that he only appeared in the form of a human being. According to *The Holy Quran* Jesus was not crucified but God raised him up to Himself. Be that as it may, what is important is neither the mysterious birth of Jesus nor his controversial demise, but his priceless teachings that have been a rich source of inspiration for countless generations throughout the centuries.

With characteristic spiritual profundity Sri Ramana Maharshi has shed light on the true meaning of the Christian faith:

> Christ is the ego.
> The Cross is the body.
> When the ego is crucified, and it perishes, what survives is the Absolute Being (God).  

For some the cross is just an ornament, but many Christians wear crosses on chains around their necks because it is a symbol of their religion. Thereby they can never forget that Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross, tortured and put to death. They view his sufferings as a sacrifice made on their behalf, believing that Jesus can vicariously save them from their sins. Little do they realise that there is more to the cross than meets the eye. The real religious symbolism of the cross consists in sacrificing selfishness in all its gross and subtle forms. There is no greater sacrifice than the total abandonment of the ego.
Ramana Sadguru
(A Radio Talk)

By Sadhu Arunachala
(Major A. W. Chadwick)

On April 14th thousands of people in India and devotees all over the world were in mourning. Their Guru Sri Ramana Maharshi had entered Maha Samadhi and they could never have the joy of sitting again in his physical presence. Although it is the tradition in India to discount death and look upon it as a welcome release from the trammels of the flesh, that is in the case of ordinary mortals, in the case of the Guru the feeling cannot be quite the same. He was the sheet anchor to whom we had become accustomed to cling; without his physical body we feel that our moorings have suddenly broken loose and that we are drifting alone on the troublesome sea of the world.

When Bhagavan passed away, the behaviour of the devotees with very few exceptions was calm and even cheerful. He would never leave us, we told each other. Had he not himself said, ‘You think I am going to die, I shall be more alive than ever.’ But still in spite of our cheerfulness, in spite of our implicit belief in what he had said, there was a gap. The Ashram did not seem quite the same. All the memories of his twenty-eight years’ association with it were undoubtedly there, but we missed the benign smile, the understanding response to our enquiry. In future we must understand that this must now be contacted within, which made it a question of faith and of our own response. It was not nearly so easy, for this demanded personal surrender and patience. No, it wasn’t the same.

But whether in his physical frame or not Bhagavan was and remained the Sadguru to hundreds of thousands of people. Some of these were fortunate to have lived with him for a time; some to have visited him; the rest only to have heard of him. But it was the same for all of them, they all loved him, all felt that they were his children and that he had an especial regard for each of them individually. For were they not his disciples?

Here it may be objected that Bhagavan himself had said that he had no disciples, so how can I possibly say that he was the universal Guru? When questioned on this very subject Bhagavan explained that though from

This was published earlier in The Mountain Path, January 1979.
the jnani's point of view all were equal so
that he could admit of no such relationship
as Guru and disciple, all being a manifesta-
tion of the One Self, from the point of view
of the person in the bondage of individual
limitation such a relationship undoubtedly
did exist. It was, as it stood, up to them. They
must realize this relationship in themselves,
they must be able to see the Guru as the pure
manifestation of the Self. And in the case of
Ramana Maharshi that necessity was realized
by so many thousands, which alone proved
his supremacy and the fact that he was in-
deed entitled to be called the Sadguru.

It must be remembered that only a lim-
ited number of people visited Bhagavan be-
cause of his philosophy or because they
intended to carry out a serious sadhana un-
der his personal direction. They came to him
as the Supreme Sat (Existence) Itself in the
flesh, something tangible and visible which
was not merely an abstraction. Philosophy
and tapas were all very well for sadhus but let
us leave that to them, was the attitude. Here
is something that we can worship, that calls
out all the best in our nature, whose very
presence gives us comfort and solves imme-
diate problems. We think of him frequently
when we are away from him and leave the
rest to him. He will look after us.

But it was not only the sophisticated and
elders who looked on him as their Guru.
Children had a special love for him, and in
fact treated him as their private property.
Thirty years ago when Bhagavan was living
in one of the caves on the side of the Hill an
English Police Officer came to see him and
specially remarked on this fact. He said that
children of all ages would climb the Hill in
the scorching midday sun, just to sit for a
while in his presence.

The greatness of his teaching was not the
intellectual depths he probed. Doubtless he
had a brain of the first magnitude, but every
word came from his personal experience, it
was not just logical conclusions valid in the
realm of language, it was fact and needed no
study of books or intellectual attainment for
its achievement. All could attain to it if they
would only follow his instructions and prac-
tise assiduously for a while.

So many people have tried to make out
that the path of Advaita is a complete denial
of the world. He never taught any such thing.
He would point out its impermanence and
the temporary aspect of its reality, but would
always say that the world was undoubtedly
there for all of us and its problems could not
be evaded but had to be faced. It was the
way of facing these, the different point of
focus, that he tried to impress on us. The
realized person saw the world with the rest
of us, but he saw it as appearance or, as we
might say, limitation of Reality. Change the
focus and look on Reality itself and then the
all-engrossing appearance of the world would
cease to hold a position of supreme impor-
tance any longer. It would still be there
doubtless, but there as the play of light and
shade on a summer landscape, a fact for the
beholder, but only a fact of appearance.

His great calm and his wonderful silence
caused him to be more and more associated
in people's minds with the Hill Arunachala
he loved so much. His long stay of fifty-four years in Tiruvannamalai by its side was itself a feat of immovable solidity. That he loved the Hill dearly is known to all. Did he not write five beautiful hymns in its praise while still a young man? He used to say that Kailas was undoubtedly the abode of Lord Siva but that the Hill was Lord Siva Himself. And for thousands of us he himself was the Hill. Even on the hottest days of the year he would go walking on it several times a day without any covering, when most of us could not even bear to put our feet on the ground. He carried out this practice regularly for years and only ceased near the end when his health began to fail.

Do you remember the five verses he wrote in its praise? I can think of no more suitable ending to my short talk than to read them to you:

**FIVE STANZAS TO SRI ARUNACHALA**

*By SRI BHAGAVAN*

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

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

He who turns inward with untroubled mind to search where the consciousness of 'I' arises, realizes the Self, and rests in Thee, O Arunachala! — like a river when it joins the ocean.

Abandoning the outer world, with mind and breath controlled, to meditate on Thee within, the Yogi, sees Thy Light, Oh Arunachala! — and finds his delight in Thee.

He who dedicates his mind to Thee and, seeing Thee, always beholds the universe as Thy figure, he who at all times glorifies Thee and loves Thee as none other than the Self, he is the master without rival, being one with Thee, Oh Arunachala! — and lost in Thy Bliss.

**MAHARSHI’S INSTRUCTION ON THE PROBLEM OF SLEEP**

Devotee: When I try to be without all thoughts, I pass into sleep. What should I do about it?

Maharshi: Once you go to sleep, you can do nothing in that state. But while you are awake, try to keep away all thoughts. Why think about sleep? Even that is a thought, is it not? If you are able to be without any thought while you are awake, that is enough. When you pass into sleep, what state in which you were before falling asleep will continue and again, when you wake up, you will continue from where you had left off when you fell into slumber. So long as there are thoughts or activity, so long would there be sleep also. Thought and sleep are counterparts of one and the same thing.

— Day by Day with Bhagavan.
From the Ashram Archives

Taken in the 1930s:
Taken outside the Old Hall, Circa 1935:


Karma and Jnana

By Prof. K. Swaminathan

The Indian life plan for a dynamic, self-reliant dharma, whose root and fruit alike are moksha or an awareness of unity, was preserved for future generations by Shankara and Ramanuja in the glass jar of an elite society. In our own time Gandhiji and Ramana Maharshi have smashed the jar and scattered the seeds. They have broken down the barrier between intellectual and popular Hinduism, between jnana and karma, between the classes and the masses. Repeatedly and laboriously Gandhiji has explained the meaning of organic swaraj as internal self-rule in the fullest Vedic sense. Sri Aurobindo too proved by his actual way of life during many decades that the world of consciousness was more real to him than the material and social world, just as Shankara had proved by his strenuous activity that this poor planet and this dear land of ours did matter enormously to him. Social concern, patriotism in the positive sense of loving and serving one's own people without ill-will to others, acceptance and practice of one's svadharma, is applied Vedanta and genuine home-grown Hinduism which has nothing to do with the lunatic antics, hair-raising miracles, promise of sudden samadhi and other pseudo-spiritual flights from responsibility offered by sundry yogis and rishis of the jet-age.

Vivekananda, Gandhi and Aurobindo understood the living connection between moksha and dharma and they exalted love and concern for one's own people, whether as cause or consequence, as an element of true religion, which is not an escape from svadharma, but an ever deeper engagement in it as spiritual sadhana and for the welfare of one's people. Politics and public service, no less than personal and family life, go to make up dharma. It is in this context, remembering the ambivalence of dharma as a force regulating all artha and kama, but itself sustained by moksha, that we should study the profound implications of what was spoken by the sage on August 15, 1917, and forms Chapter X of Ramana Gita.1 This and

From a talk by the Professor at the Delhi Kendra.

1 This chapter is entitled 'Society'.
verses 26 and 27 of the Supplement to the Forty Verses,\(^2\) besides many remarks in the Talks, make it clear that, like Gandhi, the Maharshi valued social bonds and international brotherhood and regarded the sense of equality as the mark and measure of moral excellence. The sage held aloft the heroic example of Sri Rama and his life of selfless activity. He watched with friendly interest the massive experiments of Mahatma Gandhi in relating jnana to karma.

\(\text{jnana}\) is not perceiving something. It is the experience, enjoyment and exercise of oneness, one’s whole being as awareness. One cannot see one’s eyes. One can only use them. One cannot know Being. One can only be. And to BE is to be awareness. I AM and no more. Such pure being is Siva. “Don’t expect to have visions of Siva,” we are told. Rather one should get ready to be Siva. One cannot be Siva and yet retain the ego. The loss of the ego means access of awareness. Knowing by being is alone true and total knowing; other kinds of knowing are only relative and partial. Such true knowledge leads to empathy with others, to a sharing of being and awareness, to active love and service of Narayana in his manifold forms.

The pure Vedanta or \(\text{jnana}\) of the Maharshi and the applied Vedanta or karma yoga of the Mahatma are both founded in the recognition that the one and only spiritual evil is attachment to the separate self. In his Discourses on the Gita (1926) Gandhiji says, “We can follow truth only in the measure that we shed attachment to the ego. Once we have realised that this whole universe exists in God, we would feel even thieves and tigers to be ourselves. Till we feel in that way, we may be sure that we have not attained to a state of knowledge at all. . . . It is man’s nature to do good, for all selves are one. The apparent separateness of each self has no significance. When this is realised, man’s ego melts away.”

Again, in a letter of 1935, Gandhiji says, “For a belief in rebirth, it is necessary to believe in the existence of ‘I’. If I do not exist and God alone exists, then who is to be reborn and how? This realisation itself is rebirth, isn’t it. . . Realisation comes through the heart. the head can only provide logic. But what is the worth of logic? Service alone can bring about realisation.”

For the Maharshi, however, the method of realisation includes self-enquiry as well as service.

Gandhiji’s attitude to Ramana Maharshi can be judged from the fact that whenever someone in his circle, for example, Shankerlal Banker, Rajendra Prasad or Jamnalal Bajaj, felt depressed or confused, he used to say,

26. ‘Having investigated the three states (waking, dream and deep-sleep) and holding steadfastly in your heart to the Supreme State which is above them and is free from illusion, play your part in the world, Oh hero Raghava! You have realized in the heart That which is the substratum of Reality beneath all appearances. Therefore without ever abandoning that viewpoint, play your part in the world as you please.’

27. ‘As one with feigned enthusiasm and joy, with feigned excitement and hatred, as one taking feigned initiative and, making a feigned effort, play your part in the world, Oh hero, Raghava!’
Go to Ramanasramam and come back after a month's stay there.' Usually they came back within a week or fortnight, recovered in spirit and ready to resume their work.

Meditation and action, stillness and movement, are mutually complementary — parts of the same working mechanism. In a chakki, the upper stone moving fast depends for its steadiness and its grinding efficiency on the firm stillness of the lower stone. So too with the upper and the lower jaw, the axle and the wheel, and the twin feet of Nataraja. Shanti which is pure awareness or Sat was in our time embodied by the Maharshi, as Shakti, which is awareness of satya by satya, the movement from satya to satya within Sat, was by the Mahatma. Shanti which is awareness is one aspect, and sakti, the power of action, is the other aspect of the same reality. According to Sarojini Naidu, "The two mahans — the Maharshi who gave us peace and the Mahatma who would not let us rest one moment in peace — were both working for the spiritual regeneration of India."

The jnani and the karma yogi have their appropriate functions to perform in a healthy society, as the eyes and hands have theirs in a living body.

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**SRI BHAGAVAN'S REPLY TO HIS MOTHER**

Sometime in December 1898, Alagammal, Sri Bhagavan's mother met him at Pavalakunru — for the first time since he left home. With all a mother's love she besought him to go back with her, but he sat unmoved, not answering, not even showing that he heard. Day after day she returned, bringing him tasty things to eat, entreating and reproaching, but without effect. One day, clogged by his apparent lack of feeling for her, she burst into tears. He still did not answer but, lest his compassion should show and give her false hopes of what could not happen, he rose and walked away. Another day she enlisted the sympathy of the devotees who had gathered around, pouring out her grief to them and beseeching them to intervene. One of them, Pachaiyappa Pillai, said to the Swami, "Your mother is weeping and praying; why do you not at least give her an answer? Whether it is 'yes' or 'no' you can reply to her. Swami need not break his vow of silence. Here are pencil and paper; Swami can at least write what he has to say."

He took the pencil and paper and, in utterly impersonal language, wrote:

The Ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their prarabdhabhakarma (destiny to be worked out in this life, resulting from the balance sheet of actions in past lives). Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try as you may. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to prevent it. This is certain. The best course, therefore, is to remain silent.

— Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-knowledge.
Sri Ramana Maharshi and the Indian Philosophic Tradition

By His Highness Sri Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar Bahadur
(Maharaja of Mysore)

IN the Bhagavad Gita an interesting question is raised by Arjuna. It is about a person who, though endowed with faith, becomes diverted from the path of yoga and consequently fails to achieve Self-realization. "Does he not perish", asks Arjuna, "like the split-cloud, deprived of both God-realization and worldly joy?" 1 Lord Krishna meets the question squarely and answers that there is nothing like a fall for such a person either here or hereafter. He adds further by saying that such a one takes birth in a noble or enlightened family. And there, aided by spiritual impressions acquired by him in previous births, he finally reaches the supreme spiritual state.

The answer given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna is the only explanation for Maharshi Ramana's achievement of spiritual enlightenment at a very early stage of his life although he had no training for it under the guidance of a spiritual teacher or knowledge of the necessary philosophic discipline.

Sri Ramana's life thus illustrates the truth of the Indian philosophic tradition established centuries ago, that a man sincerely given to spiritual endeavour, but, for some reason, strays away from that path, will not altogether lose the fruits of his labour. On the other hand, he will have the good fortune of being born in a family of devoted men, and there, will continue his efforts at Self-realization. This is based on the maxim that "No one who works for God-realization meets with an evil destiny". 2 In having this experience of the Supreme at an early age, the Saint of Arunachala was rivaling the great feat of Dhruva, son of Uttanapada, who succeeded in having a vision of the Lord even as a young boy.

Dhruva was not the only puranic personage whom the Saint of Arunachala tried to emulate. He tried to do what young Nachiketas of the past did. Like Nachiketas, young Venkataraman, who later came to be called Sri Ramana, desired the way to conquer death. The fear of death suddenly took possession of young Venkataraman and the

Reproduced from The Mountain Path, July, 1966.

1 Gita. VI. 37-45.
2 Ibid., Verse 40.
lad decided to solve the riddle of life. By reflecting on the problem of life and death and by careful experiment, the young boy understood the cause for the fear of death and the way of overcoming the grief caused by this dire calamity. He realised that it was the physical body that really perished and that the consciousness within the body survived. In other words, young Venkataraman understood the great truth that there was an inner Being, a Reality that persisted even after death and that this great principle was the witness of all the changing conditions of the physical body. In short, by an intuitive flash he became aware of the nature of the true Self.

Thus Sri Ramana came to know that the Self was entirely different from the body, the senses and the mind. Answering a devotee who was curious to know the nature of the Self the Sage once said, “You ought to understand that by the Self neither the physical body nor the subtle body is meant. What you are told is that if you once know the Self within which all ideas exist, not excluding the idea of yourself, of others like you and of the world, you can realize the truth that there is a reality, a Supreme Truth which is the Self of all the world. You now see the Self of all the selves, the one Real, the Supreme, the eternal Self as distinct from the ego or individual being which is impermanent. You must not mistake the ego or the body-idea for the Self.” And, just as he found the difference between the Self which was eternal and was constituted of pure consciousness and the body which was perishable and made up of matter, he also discovered the difference between the Self which was the pure spectator and the senses which suffered the same fate as the body. As for the mind, it was only an internal organ of sense and did not differ in any way from the rest of the senses. Summing up the difference between the Self and faculties, the Sage said, “I am not this physical body nor am I the five organs of sense perception: I am not the five organs of external activity, nor am I the five vital forces, nor am I even the thinking mind. When all these are eliminated, that which remains separate and alone by itself, its very nature Sat-chit-ananda, Existence-consciousness-bliss, that am I.” Not less insistent was he in pointing out the necessity of completely eliminating the ego and reaching the egoless state.

In arriving at these conclusions independently, the great saint was only confirming statements of the philosophic treatises of the past. The Upanishad has pointed out that it must be man’s endeavour to distinguish the Self from the body. The Upanishad has drawn a vivid distinction between the Self and the other elements by saying, “the mind and what is an object of the mind, intellect and what is an object of intellect, Self-consciousness and what is an object of Self-consciousness, thinking and what is an object of thinking — all these repair to the Supreme soul for dwelling.” The Bhagavad Gita had put forth a strong plea for the elimination of the ego by saying it was only the ignorant man who thought, “I am wealthy, born in a good family; who other is there like me? I
will perform sacrifices; I will give in charity, I will enjoy myself.”

Having thus become a realised soul, Sri Ramana Maharshi led from the moment of realization the life of a sthitaprajna or one of steadfast wisdom. He “discarded all desires of the mind and felt satisfied in the Self through the joy of the Self.” He became a true yogin, concentrated on the Spirit within and unattached to all things of the earth. Not that he did not take any interest in the life around him. Indeed it was his earnest desire to help all men around him who aspired to a divine life of spirituality and wisdom. The gates of his Ashram were open to everyone to come and find spiritual solace and obtain solutions of their problems. He read the daily papers and useful journals; and he kept himself well informed about men and things around him. We learn that on a certain occasion, the sage started reciting lines from Saint Manickavachagar and soon felt so moved emotionally that he shed a few tears. On another occasion he seems to have corrected one Tenamma who committed an error in reading a passage from the Ribhu Gita and who was under the impression, like others around her, that he was in deep meditation. The love and tenderness of Sage Ramana became proverbial; and he won the confidence of even the animals of Ramanashram. His affection for the cow of the hermitage, Lakshmi, was remarkable. After the manner of an Avadhuta or a God-minded devotee, he suffered without protest all incidence of pain. His conduct in silently enduring the blows of thieves who broke into his Ashram reminds one of the conduct of the great Avadhuta, described in Bhagavata.

All these activities of the Sage go to show that he was not trying to keep himself aloof from society, but was in it all the time. Only he was dwelling in the Self even when he was associating with worldly activities after the manner of a typical man of steadfast-mindedness (sthitaprajna).

Indeed he did not believe in withdrawing himself from society completely. Such a move did not fall in line with the theory of Self which the sages propounded. Talking of retirement and solitude on a certain occasion, he explained, “Abiding in the Self is solitude because there is nothing alien to the Self. Retirement must be from some one place or state to another. There is neither the one nor the other apart from the Self. All being the Self, retirement is impossible and inconceivable.” The Maharshi was keen on pointing out the universal presence of the Self and the necessity on the part of man to do his best to realize the Self. Nor was it a difficult process according to him. For he said in his characteristic quiet way, “The Self is always there. You have only to remove the veil obstructing the revelation of the Self. Once you realise the Self it becomes your direct and immediate experience. It is never lost.”

Sri Ramana was most logical in his approach to the problems of Self-realization. He did not stop merely at calling upon devotees to attempt Self-realization; he went

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3 Gita, VI, 17.
4 Ibid., II, 55.
further and explained the method one ought to take in order to realise this supreme goal.

He maintained that control of mind, curbing of desires and ethical ways of life were general aids for realization and emphasised meditation (dhyana) and enquiry (vichara) as the two essential ways of achieving the purpose. He taught that meditation or dhyana is regular battle, for it is an effort to keep hold of one thought to the exclusion of all else. Continuing his observations on meditation he observed, “When meditation is well established, it can no more be given up.” As for enquiry, he said that it was earnest Self-enquiry that really hastened the knowledge of the Self.

It is interesting to note in this context that the Sage of Arunachala was focussing the attention of the religious minded on two important lessons which the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma Sutras taught on the problem of realization. The Upanishads and Gita repeatedly speak about the utility of meditation; and the Gita in particular speaks eloquently of the yogi or the person who practises meditation. Krishna calls upon Arjuna to become a yogi for such a one was “superior to the ascetics and superior even to those versed in sacred lore. In fact, he was superior even to those who performed actions.” As for the importance of enquiry, the Brahma Sutras of Badarayana make it the starting point of Vedantic study. The opening sutra of that text says, “Then, therefore the inquiry into Brahman.”

All this should not be interpreted to mean that the Sage of Arunachala had nothing new to offer to the development of Indian philosophic thought or that he just taught what the ancient Indian seers had done. It only shows that the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi rested firmly on the foundations of the early philosophic thought of India. The contribution of Sri Ramana was unique in the sense that he approached the problem of Self-realization from a new angle. He did not worry much to make the point that the soul and the Supreme were identical, though he had complete faith in the doctrine. He was more keen on drawing attention to the natural state of the soul. To a devoted enquirer he said, “Self-enquiry, ‘Who am I?’, is a different technique from the meditation ‘I am Siva’ or ‘I am He’. I rather emphasise self-knowledge for you are first concerned with yourself before you know the world or its Lord. The ‘I am He’ or ‘I am Brahman’ meditation is more or less mental, but the quest for the Self of which I speak is a direct method and is superior to it.”

Explaining the theory of natural state, the Sage said: “Consciousness is the Self of which everyone is aware. No one is ever away from his self and therefore everyone is in fact Self-realized only, and this is the great mystery — people do not know this and want to realise the Self. Realization consists only in getting rid of the false idea that one is not realized. It is not anything new to be acquired. It must already exist or it would not.
be eternal, and only what is eternal is worth striving for.” In other words the sage was saying that the soul in its natural state was *Sat-chit-ananda* and that man had to realize this by enlightenment and removal of ignorance. The sage himself brought out the significance of the theory of natural state when he said: “To remain without question or doubt is your natural state ... the Self is always there. You have only to remove the veil obstructing the revelation of the Self.” And in this theory of the natural state, or original state, as it is also known, the Guru or the spiritual teacher did not find an important place. The sage himself had no spiritual teacher and did not believe that one was absolutely necessary for an aspirant. He maintained that there was but one Guru and that was one’s own Self: “One must not look upon the Guru as a person; he is not anything else than the real Self of the disciple. When the Self is realized, then there is neither Guru nor disciple.” The theory also did not give an important place to analysing the causes of pain as do other philosophic systems. Rather, it insisted on removing human pain and suffering.

A remarkable feature for which the Sage of Arunachala became famous was the great silence he maintained. For a time after he obtained Realization, he remained silent. It was only during the latter part of his life that he broke his silence. Of course, *mouna* or silence was considered a penance* by people of the past. Lord Krishna pointed out that one of the characteristic features of a devotee was *mouna* or practice of silence.* But what is to be noted is that Sri Ramana made it his chief instrument for Self-realization and for communicating his teaching, although it may look odd to say that he taught in silence. The Sage himself spoke highly of this holy practice and said, “That stage which transcends speech and thought is *mouna*, it is meditation without mental activity. Deep meditation is eternal speech. Silence is ever-speaking; it is the perennial flow of language.” When visitors came to him and told him their problems he did not always answer but sometimes merely smiled at the devotees silently. And this conduct on the part of the Sage worked; for many a visitor has admitted that his problem was solved somehow. Surely, this kind of silence on the part of the Sage was more creative.

Such was the unique personality of Sage Ramana. Like all other sages of the past, this saint of modern times desired to help those who sought to progress on the path of spirituality, While some of his methods look strange, his object was always to make a man better and to make human society holy. The life and teachings of the great Saint Ramana, thus bear out the saying of the *Bhagavata*:

> Yoga or Sankhya or righteousness or a study of the Vedas or asceticism or renunciation or sacrifice or good deeds do not captivate me. Neither vows nor worship nor holy places are able to capture me. I can only be won by the fellowship of saints, which brings to an end all attachment.9

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7 *Gita*, XVII, 16.
9 *Bhagavata*, II, 12, 1.
Samipya and Sayujya

By I.S. Madugula

Once in a time long gone before
there met on the sunny seashore
an alwar and a nayanar
come severally from afar.

In minds exceedingly devout
they both rendered profuse thanks
to the Almighty for the great sight
with hearts brimming and much delight.

"Look, friend," said the alwar
"The ocean, the waves, the sun,
the sands, the foam, the shells,
Lord Narayan Himself on the Great Serpent

with his servants and devotees
making merry in his presence
circling and dancing,
and praying and chanting."

The nayanar, though, saw the blue-throated Lord Siva
from whose matted locks
flowed the Ganga, thrashing

and in divine bliss splashing.
"This is verily Siva, non-distinct.
I'd rather be one with the Lord
than be separated in body or soul."
Sri Ramana Gita consisting of three hundred verses contains the spiritual instruction of Sri Bhagavan given in response to queries on various subjects by Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, Daivarata, Karshni, Yoganatha, Kapali, Visalakshi, Vaidarbha and Amritananda Yati.

The dialogues took place on different dates — broadly during the period 1913-1917.

Here, Sri Bhagavan is the Teacher in the manner of Sri Krishna who gave the Bhagavad Gita. And, the position of Kavyakanta is the same as that of Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa who composed and compiled the teaching of Vasudeva to form a compendium of 700 verses.

We present here the Ms. of the eighteenth chapter of Ramana Gita in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan. The speciality of this chapter is that it clearly brings out the transcendental spiritual state of Sri Maharshi, which is one of uninterrupted absorption in the Self.

An English translation is furnished between pages 213 and 215.
अष्टादशोऽवस्थायायां

धर पराशर गोवतसमुद्रमवः
असु मती तुर संव पशु स्वरः
वि मल सुन्दर पेदितंतमन्
कमल नरलि श्वाल वि प्रेमभाणे

ि रूपम् श्री गुणला श्रावकासिमवः
परमं ते संमांजलम् संध्युः
करुणाम् दुःखध्वनि व्यक्ति रितान्
सततं मात्रम् नित्य स्वरूपमक्षे

अ निदः सेधम् मा जाने भाषण्यं
भ्रम मद्दितार्क कुशो ब्रह्मक्षणं
अ सिरसेवं परं सीर सरस्तो लोकामें
सिद्धं तृतीयं मे भवकु तकारसे

परिणातमधुमकलोऽभिचिन्हं
चक्तरेण त्रिं निमंह स्वरूपाः
अनुवं चिदूरस्थि निरूपणं
स्वतं वशोरङ्गितासंगमसंगमाः

निमिर्जस्ति रिव पंकजाकोभवां
पदजुपोजज़ भाव मनेहुज्सा
परिहरेत मनेत गुणाख़ारी
॥ ९ ॥
मदुत्तमेवचेदेद्विसिंहीतकृ
विकसितं वदनं सरसीरुसे
॥ १० ॥
मनसीशहूल्य महेशुहिस्तति भी
हुं दिक सैत मांसंत इवारुणं
॥ ११ ॥
अदय मम अतनो किन्ते स्रृते
परूष चिर्म में क्रिया प्रवक्ते
॥ १२ ॥
* सिंहारोज म मान मनो रथं
पूजा नमः धनचिब्रु हुरीवशानी
बिद्गत मोह माती भ म भावनी
श्रमितं सरसुरसविनेनवसंह"
भवमहोद्ध्यतारुण कर्मव जिन
जयिक्रि विशेष सदृशयतं
॥ १३ ॥
मा ता ममेति चागराज सुतारुपीके
कामा नन्ते भजनि यहे पिता ममेति
अवधारस्य समवपृश्विरस्यानेल
तदृशितार्थ जिरितं कृति विभूतिः
॥ १४ ॥
वेदादिपा कदनोतर कछ गृही
मुहृत्तर्थार पुसुस्य मरेश्वरे श्रेयं
क्रिष्ण सरेष मनेयत मनोरथं
ि इन्द्रानंदम"
सुखमा मृत्यु गृह मृते जनता प्रणाला
संपत्ति शब्द पतलक्ष्य रथु स्य सर्वथा ॥ ॥ १०२॥
देह विन्यास परिश्राव व दंड वाचिन
दुः रक्षान्यथा रक्ष करं अर्क तलारकस्य ॥
(वसल्ल भयं भय महो सततं भजनं
इति तथापितां त मानस संगें सर्वं ॥ ॥ १३॥)
भौरव संपवद दुः सुर्य गिरियार नूनः
वा निगट्ये रघुक मेष गवीरता यायाः
क्षयां तत्वं तवं त मच्छ मदिकस्य पाठायो
दं तां निदुर्स्वं नमांत्यनि वादविवः ॥ ॥ १३॥
मीलार बिंदु सुः सदा सदस्य प्रस्थाते
नुष्यं तथामहु सिति तो मधोंञ्च प्रबैलेन ॥
श्रामचारों रितेन तेन नु पितं बल मृहः बाणः
यंस्माः यद्यमयत मनवकार त मृहं द्वैतं ते मे ॥ ॥ १३॥
यं स्यापुलापि रम्य चरि सणीयं भावा
गिरीयां णलों कपृत्तां श्रुं मदिकी रूपाः
संबोध्य च सिरव सूतियां मनोहरान क्रमः
स्त्रादेहं बुद्रक्षिण मयापितं पामलिमां ॥ ॥ १३॥
विदः कर्जरं नरदृश्य मापि
में नेब्रह्म रथ महो गुस्तां वदिवें ॥
मंदार वृक्ष मिष्ट सबैलनस्य पादः ।
चण्ड यो श्रीतस्प परिता पम्पाहुनात || १९१
प्रस्तव गर्मिनक्त करी कविचितhya किः
सेतुभिदि निगमजीवन सागरलाम ||
भूम्य तस्मान तस्मान तस्मान तस्मान तस्मान
रसायन तस्मान तस्मान तस्मान तस्मान तस्मान
वेकदन श्री बृहस्पति सारस्बले || १९२
पौराणिक सर्वकाल मग्नाच्याचायक्ष्याचः ॥
गुरु मर्यादा मचिस सर्वतो मुखवः
सूरत भूतात्म नो मिलितम्या गुरुः || १९३
देव ज्ञानिक सर्वरा माति ज्ञातिः
काययं शंकर रसिकरं चण्डययं विष्क्रमः ॥
गंभरकम्बिजः निम्बापि संपूर्णः
दुर्भिषु जितमुच्य भा वर्षनायम् || १९४
को क मातृ कुच्चुकु खु या यायम
शृङ्गीकर स्लंब कु ती महा कव्वे॥
द्रव बिन्दु बिन्दु शिखर नन्दन दिव्यः
भूमिकां सर्वात कार नेध्रतः ॥ १९५
भूमि सर्वात्ते लिङ्गित ली य सुदा ज्ञे
क्रीणाः भूमिभृं शः रंग ब्राह्मणाः ॥
श्रुतिनिःश्चि तदशा प्रद्युनां ।
वृति वादलति सिद्ध रस्स्या तवै॥
श्रेय्यो भीतिर्मुखं मौनिनिःपुरुषिः
प्राणे वशसि च पृथुतं कर्मिः॥

dharmakirtia

कैशं हृद्धिष्ठिणं यागुः पिणा॥
ब्रह्मकैपिवः जो कै प्रकाश्यम्
अनौर्यि शुनिव वर्षं किवः
पंडित्येऽविपदसेन्चित्त्वेत्पिणा॥
पक्षं पत्ति रहिन्ति तं समेक्ष्यति॥
शक्तिः महाचरिता त्रिन्दिः संयुतः
अन्तिनमं सयिः भृदचरितम्॥

dharmakirtia

श्री तरागः शपिलोकवर्षस्य
देव लंभाश मयिनमेवकश्चित्तः॥
रजयथा सचित्तुर्तिष्कम्ममा
वेष्यं तु निनिष्ठभीयतामिनि॥
तो बब्बलं शुद्धं तो भिनिमित्तः
वीणा जानीला च चरणं समागतं॥

dharmakirtia
अभिमान में सिंह ने क्रूरता की क्रिया तो समझा। तब सिंहने कहा, "ज्मील करो यह चित्त करो। िहोगा मेरे लिए मारकर, सुभक्ष ना अड़े।"

इति श्री रमण गीता तु श्रिष्ठ सम्मता यह योग शा रस्म जो ते अभिकारी श्री सिंह रमण ना सौते परिवर्तित वे अस्वाद हो रहे या यह।

इति श्री रमण गीता तां।।
स मा सां।।
अंतसंस्करण।

श्री रमण गीता तां।।
स मा सां।।
अंतसंस्करण।
The attainment of nirvana or spiritual liberation is the religious aspiration of every Buddhist. It is the sumum bonum, the highest or chief good.

Since desirelessness or freedom from all attachments is one of the principal characteristics of this exalted state of nirvana, one can raise a philosophical objection at the very outset of our inquiry: Does it not seem contradictory to desire the state of desirelessness? Don't Buddhists look rather absurd when they start craving for that dimension of being wherein there is no craving whatsoever? Through the instrumentality of the conditioned mind will it ever be possible to attain the unconditioned? The problem is compounded because the very statement 'conditioned mind' emanates from the mind's own conditioned state. Expressed differently, the question is: will the mind, given its self-centred mess, ever be a party to throw off once and for all its own karma? Questions of this kind are difficult, if not impossible, to answer, especially because the spiritual dimension of nirvana is not comprehensible to the intellect with all its prejudices, predispositions and the like. Similarly, questions relating to the infinite distances of space, the nature of time or timeless eternity, are beyond the capacity of the mind. Nevertheless, we can at least make guesses about nirvana, useless though it is in a sense, for surely there is no substitute for actually experiencing Illumination oneself. It is foolish on our part to discuss the subject. For, strictly speaking, only the Buddhas and arhats are qualified to talk about nirvana.

The Sanskrit word 'nirvana' literally means 'blown out', 'extinguished' (as a fire or a lamp), 'set as the sun', 'calmed',

The following books have been referred to in the course of preparation of this article:
'quieted', 'tamed', 'dead', 'deceased', 'lost', 'disappeared', 'immersed', 'plunged' and 'immoveable'. The Pali word \textit{nibbana} has the following meanings: 'freedom from desire', 'cooling', 'emancipation' and 'the final bliss'. All these terms are worthy of consideration as they help to convey something of the flavour of \textit{nirvana}.

Often in Buddhist literature the \textit{nirvanic} state is only indirectly indicated. There are numerous fascinating allusions to \textit{nirvana}. Such information is only helpful for us to think of \textit{nirvana} in abstract terms. Is it really possible to describe the indescribable? The safer course is to state what \textit{nirvana} is \textit{not} than what it actually is.

\textit{Samsaric} servitude entails entanglement in the sorrowful cycle of births and deaths. Sorrow is inseparable from life. Suffering is our lot. Who can escape from the clutches of suffering? There is suffering both at birth and death. It is symbolically significant that babies cry when leaving the womb and entering this so-called wonderful world. Separation from loved ones causes suffering; association with unpleasant persons results in suffering; without some suffering it is not possible to pass an examination, but failing in an examination also creates suffering; those who have to join the ranks of the unemployed have to suffer, but there is suffering even in the process of finding a job and earning one's living thereafter; the physical and mental discomforts of the sick and the dying are forms of suffering; our brief respite from suffering are termed 'happiness', but such periods, alas, are shortlived. The attainment of \textit{nirvana} is immediately followed by the cessation of suffering. Let us therefore cross the \textit{karmic} stream of becoming. On the opposite bank of the stream one can find the \textit{karma}-free celestial state of \textit{being}. The few who succeed in getting there know neither birth nor death.

On one occasion a wanderer approached the Venerable Sariputta, the foremost disciple of the Buddha, and said: "Friend Sariputta, it is said, 'nibbana, nibband. What now is \textit{nibbana}?" Sariputta replied: "The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion: this, friend, is called \textit{nibbana}."

In answer to a question posed by the thoughtful \textit{brahmin} Janussoni, Buddha himself declared: "When, \textit{brahmin}, a person is impassioned with lust ... depraved through hatred ... bewildered through delusion, overwhelmed and infatuated by delusion, then he plans for his own harm, for the harm of others, for the harm of both; and he experiences in his mind suffering and grief. But when lust, hatred and delusion have been abandoned, he neither plans for his own harm, nor for the harm of others, nor for the harm of both; and he does not experience in his mind suffering and grief. In this way, \textit{brahmin}, \textit{nibbana} is directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, worthy of application, to be personally experienced by the wise". The teaching is crys-
tal clear. The flower of nirvana blooms only in the purified soil wherein lust, hatred and delusion have all been weeded out completely. There is, in addition, the probability of finding spiritual illumination immediately, in this very life, provided of course one succeeds in cleansing oneself interiorly on the aforementioned lines.

A deep understanding of the anatta doctrine is an essential prerequisite for the attainment of nirvana. Whereas Buddhist teachings can be found in other religious and philosophical systems, the anatta doctrine is unique to Buddhism. Not surprisingly, Buddha has been called anatta-vadi or the Teacher of Impersonality. It is necessary to delve into this question with patience and open-mindedness because various commentators have frequently misunderstood and misrepresented the doctrine of anatta, which can be described as the fundamental truth of non-ego, egolessness, non-self or impersonality.

Before discussing the question of impersonality, let us be clear about what exactly is meant by 'ego' or 'personality'. Either within our psychophysical organism or outside it, is there anything that is changeless, indestructible, self-existing and eternal? If there were anything that is changeless, indestructible, self-existing and eternal, we can ascribe personality, permanence and immortality to it.

Before examining the mind-body combination that is identified as 'me', we can consider the composition of any external object. A bicycle, for instance, appears to be a self-existing object, but actually it owes its existence to certain workers who, like the bicycle, are also subject to change, decay and eventual death or destruction. Neither the bicycle nor our psychophysical organisms can exist forever. Neither is capable of eternal life. Besides, neither has the attributes of personality and permanence. A bicycle comes into existence only when we have put together its various parts such as its handlebar, crossbar, seat, wheels, tyres, pedals, chains and brakes. The bicycle is only a temporary assemblage of things which in themselves are all subject to change, decay and disappearance. Similarly, all the constituent parts of our psychophysical organisms are also subject to alteration and demise.

Our minds consist of collections of concepts. Some thoughts are buried in the hidden depths of the psyche, while other thoughts are given to surfacing easily. The stream of thought, like the wild waters of a restless river, flows ceaselessly. There is no motionlessness, but only movement. The 'mind' certainly has the semblance of permanency when in truth it is always in a state of flux. Because we are not perceptive enough we fail to see that our minds are nothing more than constantly changing combinations of thoughts: hence the illusion that the mind is a permanent entity. The idea of 'mind' is really a mirage. In our everyday lives we have to use words such as 'mind' and 'I' as it facilitates communication between people, but philosophically speaking, both 'mind' and 'I' have no real existence as abiding entities.
The rare release called *nirvana* becomes a distinct possibility only when there is a deep insight into the illusory nature of the mind and the ego.

The illusion of mind is closely interrelated with the illusion of 'I', especially because it is in the womb of the mind that the cunning 'I' is conceived; naturally, it is the mind that continuously provides the ego with adequate nourishment for its survival.

The 'I' thought is the root of all evil. Basically, the urge to exploit others to further one's selfish ends springs from the ego. Selfishness is the path to acquiring wealth whereas selflessness is the road to the renunciation of riches and the evolution of a caring society. 'My caste', 'my race', 'my country', 'my family' and all other ego-based thoughts and emotions have throughout history not only antagonized otherwise friendly people but also led the way to bloodshed and wars. If anybody deserves to be denounced as 'the devil' or 'the supreme sinner', it is surely the 'I'. Just a trace of egotism is enough to spoil any sublime virtues like charity, generosity, affection or compassion; so insatiable is the ego's thirst for recognition, fame, power, position and prestige that people tend to be assertive, aggressive and ruthless. The presence of the 'I' makes us self-centred: its total absence, selfless saints.

Buddha delivered a discourse on the very subject under consideration here. *Cularahulovada Sutta* was addressed to the Venerable Rahula, the Buddha's only offspring, at Savatthi in Anathapindika's Park. On that memorable occasion, according to the scriptures, many thousands of deities were present, thinking that the Enlightened One would guide Rahula further to *nirvana* by helping him to destroy his defilements.

**Buddha:** Rahula, what do you think? Is the eye permanent or impermanent?

**Rahula:** Impermanent, venerable sir.

**Buddha:** Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?

**Rahula:** Suffering, venerable sir.

**Buddha:** Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: This is mine, this I am, this is my self?

**Rahula:** No, venerable sir.

**Buddha:** Are any feeling, any perception ... any consciousness that arise with eye-contact ... permanent or impermanent?

**Rahula:** Impermanent, venerable sir.

**Buddha:** Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?

**Rahula:** Suffering, venerable sir.

**Buddha:** Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: This is mine, this I am, this is my self?

**Rahula:** No, venerable sir.

In a similar vein Buddha continued to ask whether or not there is such a thing as 'my self' in any of the other doors of perception.
Buddha: Rahula, what do you think? Is the ear permanent or impermanent? ... Is the body permanent or impermanent? ... Are any feeling, any perception, any consciousness that arise with mind-contact ... permanent or impermanent?\(^3\)

Buddha drew attention to the fact that whatever is impermanent and subject to change, such as all the experiences and thoughts and feelings of this psychophysical organism, given their transitoriness, cannot be rightly regarded as "this is my self".

Rahula realised the truth that is inherent in this 'no-self' teaching. He became disenchanted not only with his sense organs but also with all states of consciousness. Disenchantment with 'I' or 'self' resulted in dispassion or calmness. There was liberation or the freedom from all attachments which is the state of timeless Silence. Ceasing to cling to anything, desiring nothing, he attained the peace of nirvana.

In a sense, the statement that the self is reduced to nothing and annihilated at the attainment of nirvana is not correct. The word 'annihilation' is a misnomer because, in the first place, how can one annihilate something that does not exist? At nirvana there appears to be an eradication of the self, or, more precisely, a remarkable realisation that there was never such a thing as the self.

Just like an old and withered branch that suddenly falls from a tree, the illusory self drops to its death the moment one sees through it.

Although no verbal description can ever convey the essence of that transcendental state of nirvana, in the Udana one can get a fascinating glimpse of it for the Buddha towards the end of his life addressed his monks as follows: "O Bhikkus, there is an abode that is not born, that has no origin, that is not made and that is not conditioned. O Bhikkus, if there were not this unborn, unoriginated, unformed and unconditioned state, then there would be no escape from your present state which is subject to birth, which has an origin, which is put together and also conditioned. You can extricate yourself from it as there is this absolutely unconditioned abode that is untouched by causation."

The supramundane and imperishable state of nirvana can be attained here and now, in this very life; it is therefore quite different from the concept of an eternally blissful state in a celestial realm that is realisable only in the hereafter. Nirvana is neither a gift from any god nor a supreme Being, but just an occurrence that is causeless: that is to say, it is outside the field of cause and effect (karma). Buddha taught that any volitional act results in the creation of karma: "I declare that volition (chetana) is karma." Whereas in Sanskrit the word 'chetana' can mean consciousness, in Pali it denotes 'volition'. Any action that is propelled by a motive, determined by a psychological trait, causes the formation of karma. This means that only motiveless deeds are without the stain

\(^3\) Majjhima Nikaya, 147.
of *karma*. The sayings and doings of a liberated individual (*arhat*) or a Buddha are *karma*-less in the sense that they are done for their own sake, without any ulterior motive whatsoever and with total indifference to the fruits of action. Only such deeds are pure and *karma*-less as they emanate from the *nirvaniic* state of being, which is in contradistinction to the state of *karmic* becoming. Needless to say, *nirvana* occurs when the chain of *karma* has been broken and there is no more generation of it.

All things are either conditioned by causes (*samkhata*) or not conditioned by causes (*asamkhata*). Anything that is conditioned is governed by three characteristics — they arise, they disappear and they change. Thus every conditioned thing is subject to change and disappearance. This universal law is applicable to both mind and matter. Even the minutest speck in the universe is in a state of ‘constant becoming’ if one may use such a paradoxical expression. But *nirvana* alone, because it is not conditioned by causes, is birthless, changeless and deathless. Therefore *nirvana* is the only Reality: all else is unreal (*maya*).

Is *nirvana* a non-dualistic state? Buddha explained that in *nirvana* there is a transcending of “the Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception”. This attainment is even beyond our intellectual grasp especially because we have not gone thus far.

Evidently, *nirvana* is even not only beyond non-duality but also beyond all states of consciousness. One can draw this inference from the following conversation between Sariputta and his friend Udayi.

**Sariputta:** *Nirvana* is happiness! It is happiness!

**Udayi:** How can there be happiness if there is no sensation?

**Sariputta:** The absence of sensation is itself happiness.

It is paradoxical that *nirvana* cannot be experienced: first, there is no ‘experiences’ to experience *nirvana*; second, no ‘experiencing’ nor ‘recording and remembering’ of it is possible since *nirvana* is outside the sphere of consciousness.

To find *nirvana* is it better to channel my energies outwards or inwards? Is it better to seek external assistance and pray or to become utterly self-reliant and inquire interiorly?

The Venerable Nagasena explained in *The Questions of King Milinda* that although *nirvana* is not situated in any specific spot, yet *nirvana* is. In the same way that fire is not stored up in any particular place but arises when the required conditions are there, *nirvana* cannot be found in any particular place, yet it is attained when the necessary requirements are met.

Difficult though it was, Nagasena tried hard to describe the nature of *nirvana* in a series of similes:

As a lotus in bloom remains dry in water, *nirvana* remains stainless and immaculate with no defilements whatsoever.
Nirvana can be likened to water that washes out defilements and dissolves craving.

Nirvana can be likened to medicine that detoxifies those poisoned by defilements; it is a cure for suffering. Nirvana is ambrosia — the food of the gods imparting immortality. Nirvana is devoid of defilements. Nirvana can be likened to the ocean that is mighty and boundless; like the ocean that does not fill despite the waters of the rivers that merge with it; nirvana is not enlarged because of the beings that enter into it. Nirvana, the dwelling of the arhats, is decorated with the fine flowers of purity, wisdom and Liberation.

Nirvana can be likened to the life-sustaining food with which one can overcome old age and death; it increases spiritual strength; it gives the beauty of holiness; it wipes away the defilements and their attendant suffering.

Nirvana can be likened to space that is neither born nor dies; it does not disappear in one place and reappear in another; it is invincible; it cannot be stolen; it remains unattached; it is the sphere wherein Arhats move; none can put obstacles in its way. Nirvana stretches away into infinity.

Nirvana can be likened to a wish-fulfilling gem that gives great joy. Nirvana has the lustre of a gem.

Nirvana can be likened to red sandalwood that is difficult to find; its fragrance is beyond compare. Red sandalwood is acclaimed by the good; similarly, nirvana is praised by the Noble beings.

As ghee has special qualities, so also has nirvana. The sweet perfume of ghee can be compared to the sweet perfume of virtue which is part and parcel of nirvana. The delicious taste of ghee can be likened to the delicious taste of Enlightenment that is nirvana.

Nirvana can be likened to the lofty summit of an extremely exalted mountain. This mountain peak of nirvana is immovable. It is also inaccessible in the sense that nirvana is far beyond the reach of the defilements. There no defilements can ever germinate. The realm of nirvana, like the mountain top, is free: neither is there bias in favour of nor bias against anything.

When the good king asked whether there is any place on which a person might stand and attain nirvana, Nagasena replied: "Yes, that place is virtue." Unless one is grounded in virtue it will not be possible to realise it.

Since nirvana can be realised only within ourselves it is important to purify ourselves thoroughly and make preparations for it. That is surely the first step on the road to the Ultimate. We have to cleanse away, as already mentioned, all the accumulated defilements such as selfishness, craving, hatred, spitefulness, envy and pride. The list of defilements is very long! Rather than speculate about Enlightenment, we should at least begin the quest for it by putting our own houses in order.
1. (Of him) who was born in the illustrious line of Parasara, who brought renown to the *brahmin* community, the son of pure-souled Sundara Pandita, with eyes large like lotus petals;

2. The dweller in the Ashramam at Arunachala, the *Paramahamsa* (saint of the highest order), the stainless one, the steadfast one, who has assumed active life out of compassion, but is ever abiding in the imperishable Self;

3. Whose speech dispels all doubts, whose look is a hook to the elephant in rut, namely delusion, who incessantly endeavours for the happiness of others but is utterly negligent in matters concerning his own body;

4. Whose body glows with the hue of a ripe mango, who has absolute mastery over the fickle senses, who is wedded to Valli¹, Immortal Awareness, who in a few words conveys the essence of *Agamas* (scriptures);

5. Who by his pure, resplendent rays removes in (due) time the inertia of the worshippers at his feet, as the sun by his own rays, who is a mine of inexhaustible auspicious qualities;

6. Who in speech is softness itself, tender in look, whose face is like a full-blown lotus, whose mind is a void like the moon in daylight, who is shining in the Heart like the sun in the sky;

7. Who is unkind to his own body, who is strictly austere, whose mind self-contained is averse to the whole multitude of sense objects, who is a *rishi* devoid of anger and desire, who borne on the billows of Spirit, is immersed in bliss;

¹ Valli — one of the two consorts of Lord Subrahmanya.
8. Who is devoid of delusion, who is without greed or fancy, who free from jealousy is ever cheerful, who is ever engaged in helping (others) to cross the ocean of births without any thought of reward;

9. The incarnation of God Subrahmanya who pierced the Krauncha hill who, when Ganapati saying “Mother is mine” sat on the lap of Parvati, declared “Never mind, Father is mine” and got on the lap of Siva and was kissed by Him on the head;

10. Who is the mystic import of the mantra: “Om Vachadbhuve Namah” (Salutation to Him born of the Word; alternatively, ‘Salutations to the Fire of Brahman whence emerges the Word’);

11. Who is an ascetic without danda (staff) and yet is ‘Dandapani’ (wielder of the staff, a name of God Subrahmanya), who is Taraka (aid to cross) of the ocean of sorrow and also is the enemy of Taraka (demon slain by Subrahmanya), who having renounced ‘Bhava’ (birth) yet always worships ‘Bhava’ (name of God Siva), who is ‘Hamsa’ (Swan, a term by which sages are known) and yet is devoid of attachment to ‘Manasa’ (mind as well as the lake in the Himalayas);

12. Who is not less than the golden Mount (Meru) in glorious imparterubility, who even excels the ocean in depth, who by his patience surpasses the immovable Earth, the nourisher of all, who is the exemplar of self-control, who is farthest from even the whisper of excitement;

13. Who in grace resembles the moon, equals the sun in lustre, and by abidance in Brahman (the Supreme) reminds one of the Father (Lord Dakshinamurti) dwelling at the foot of the banyan tree, who is ever unperturbed, who is younger than myself (Ganapati).³

14. In whose head (Sahasrara) shines even now fair Devasena (lit - army of Gods, the name of God Subrahmanya’s consort) in the form of auspicious thought, who still is untouched by Cupid, who though a householder is yet the head among the hermits;

15. Who is the dispenser of boons to the world of devotees, who shines as the master of even Ganapati, the illustrious preceptor of mantras, who like the Mandara (the celestial tree) steals away misery from all people who seek shelter at his feet;

2 Vedāti — the origin of the Vedas i.e., OM. Pakadamanottara; Pakadamana is Indra (La) and next to it (uttara) is Vā. Kachchapesa is the root-syllable cha of Rudra known as Kurmesa. Dharadhara (mountain) is the root da, Sushupti denotes Bha the root-symbol of the Sakti known as Nidra (sleep) and Amareswara is U the symbol of Amareswara (Rudra) and dhūṇi is got by joining these three. The Sakti Sukshmaamrita is denoted by E and that with Amrita, Va the symbol of water becomes Ve. And these letters with Pranati (obeisance) i.e., Namah form the Mantra Om Vachadbhuve Namah and Bhagavan Ramana is described here as its Secret Import understood by the wise. And so the Mantra of Bhagavan (Ramana) Guru is got from this verse as OM VACHADBHUVE NAMAH.

— Guru Mantra Bhadra of Ganapati Muni.

³ Ganapati Muni considers himself the elder son of Siva and thinks of Sri Ramana as the younger son of Siva, Subramanya.
16. The re-incarnation of Bhattapada\(^4\) who composed \textit{Tantravartika} the elixir of the \textit{Vedas} sparkling with so many brilliant, ingenious arguments and won the eulogy of all scholars, who however now elucidates the utterances of \textit{Vedanta};

17. The master who composed the five gems of the Hymn to Arunachala\(^5\) which comprise the quintessence of the whole \textit{Vedanta} and which though terse and short, are all-comprehensive aphorisms;

18. Who though not educated in Sanskrit, and devoid of poetic touch with literature, has such inspiration in composing, that words would flash forth with a trail of ideas;

19. The reincarnation of the \textit{brahmin} child\(^6\), the great poet and sage of boundless intelligence, who sipped the breast milk of the Mother of the universe and sang in dancing tunes the praises of Siva;

20. The third incarnation\(^7\) on this earth of God Subrahmanya who pierced the Krauncha Mountain, the incarnation taken for dispelling the darkness of mere ratiocination by revealing the state of \textit{Brahmanishtha} (abidance in the Supreme Self);

21. The celebrated poet in Tamil, the language adored by Agastya and other sages, who beheld the supreme Light Eternal by his own intelligence without the aid of a master;

22. Who without the least partiality gives the same look of grace to a boy or a dull cowherd, to a monkey or a dog or a knave, to a scholar or a simple devotee;

23. Powerful and yet peaceful, full of devotion and yet without any differentiation, dispassionate and yet affectionate towards all, endowed with divine glory and yet humble in conduct;

24. Who wrote “I am going to Father’s presence. So, no search need be made for me,” left home and arrived at the foot of Arunachala;

25. Of such a one, embellished with all good qualities, who is known as Bhagavan Ramana, Amritanatha Yatindra enquired regarding the boundless glory of \textit{siddhas} (perfected beings).

26. Bhagavan the dweller on the Hill told him, “The glory of \textit{siddhas} is beyond comprehension. They (\textit{siddhas}) are equal to Siva, indeed they are forms of Siva Himself, They are also capable of granting the fulfilment of all aspirations.”

This is the eighteenth canto entitled \textbf{ON THE GLORY OF SIDDHAS} in Sri Ramana Gita, the science of Brahman, the scripture of Yoga, composed by Vasishtha Ganapati, the disciple of Ramana

\(^4\) Bhattapada (Kumarila Bhatta) was a staunch adherent of the \textit{Vedas} and of \textit{Purva Mimamsa} of the school of Jaimini, whereas Sri Bhagavan though formerly incarnated as Kumarila Bhatta, is now engrossed in expounding \textit{Vedanta}, the \textit{Uttara Mimamsa} of the school of Vyasa.

\(^5\) Arunachala \textit{Panchanatma}.

\(^6\) Saint Jnanasambandha.

\(^7\) The two other incarnations are Kumarila Bhatta and Saint Jnanasambandha as mentioned before.