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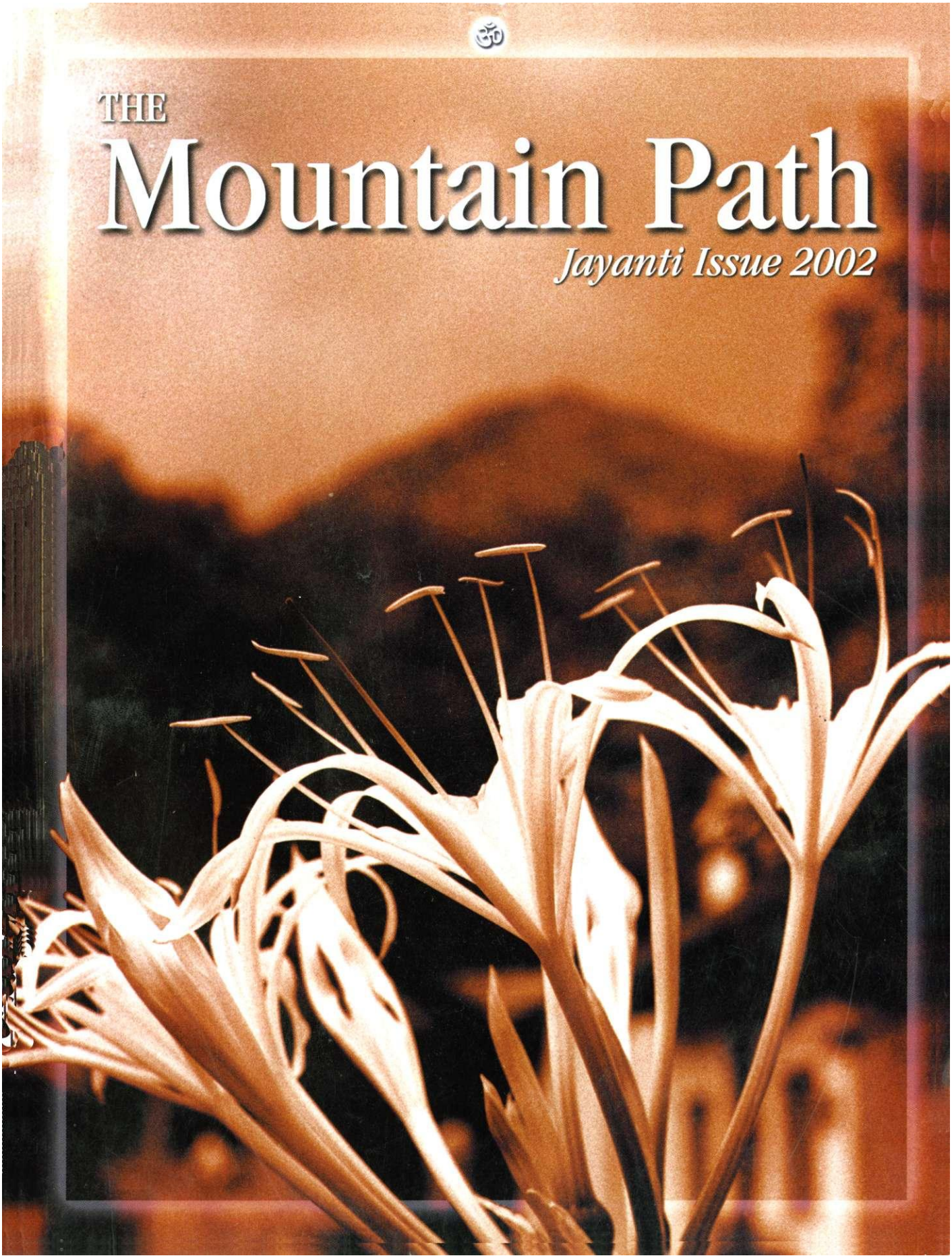
THE Mountain Path

Jayanti Issue 2002



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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

– The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1

Jayanti 2002

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Cover :
Arunachala: View from walkway between Bhagavan's *Samadhi* and *Nirvana* Room, with spider lilies in bloom

Photo:
Dev Gogoi

Sketches of Sri Bhagavan and Tirujnana Sambandar:
Maniam Selven

Portrait of Muthuswami Dikshitar:
S. Rajam

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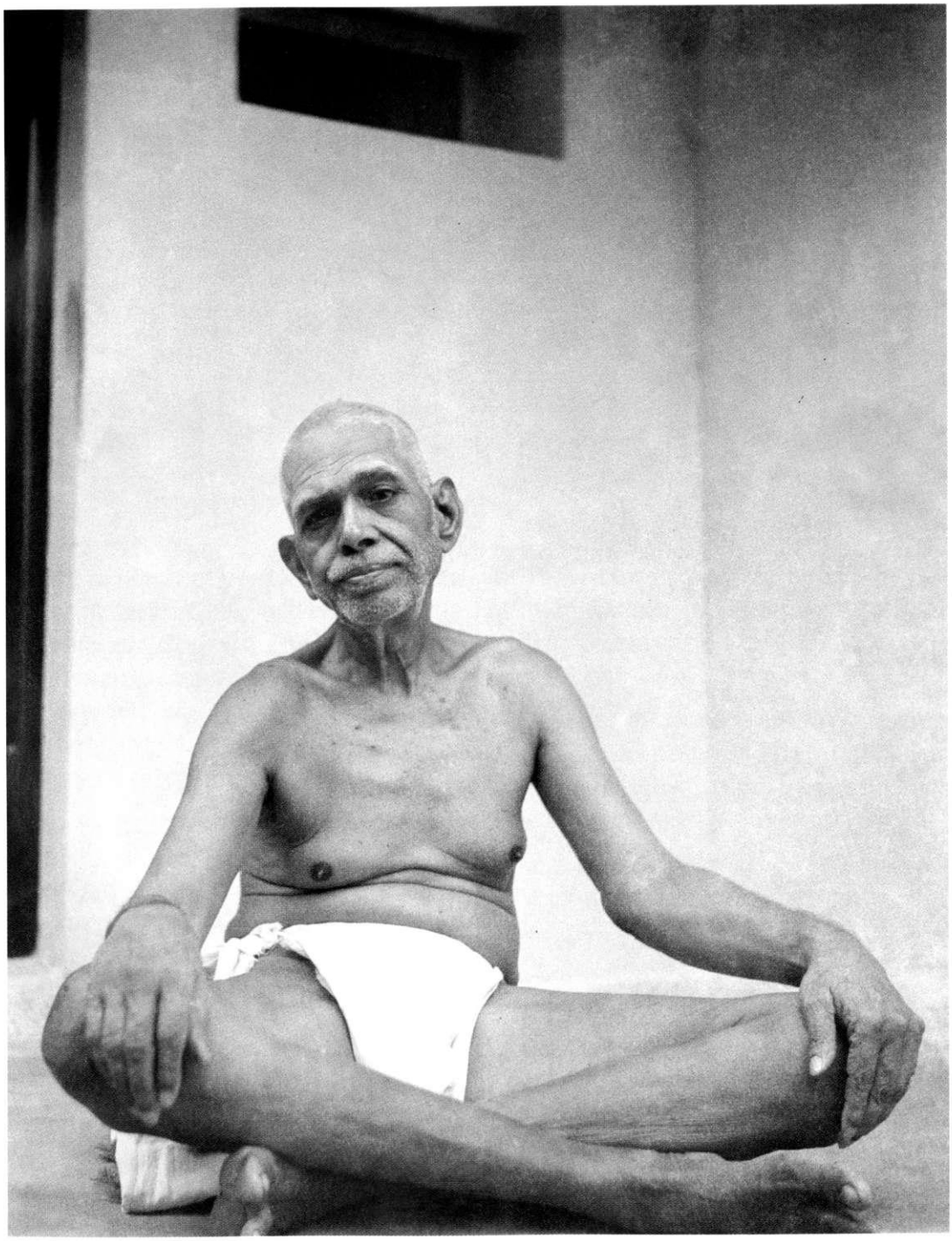
The Mountain Path

- **The aim of this journal is to set forth the traditional wisdom of all religions and all ages, especially as testified to by their saints and mystics, and to clarify the paths available to seekers in the conditions of our modern world.**
- Contributions for publication should be addressed to The Editor, *The Mountain Path,* Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. They should be in English and typed with double spacing. Contributions not published will be returned on request.
- No payment is made for contributions published.
- *The editor is not responsible for statements and opinions contained in signed articles.*
- Contributions are accepted only on condition that they do not appear elsewhere before being published in *The Mountain Path.* They can be published later elsewhere but only with acknowledgement to *The Mountain Path.*

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



EDITORIAL

The Self-evident Self

THE majority of people believe in the existence of God. Such belief is basic and in certain circles, it would be preposterous even to suggest anything contrary. However one must contend with the fact that there are the non-believers, perhaps in every country of the world.

On account of the non-conformists it would be difficult to affirm that the belief in God is universal. Such a statement may turn out to be an approximation. However, there is full justification for it if we say that the thought of God is universal. The non-believer in God has necessarily to think of Him when he denies Him. Perhaps he has to think of Him even more intensely than the believer since his statements about God are to be loaded with some punch or vehemence in order to break common beliefs.

Even among the believers, it looks as if many cannot go beyond an anthropomorphic conception of God. God is regarded only as a superman.

A series of cartoons entitled *Children's Letters to God* published (reproduced) by a leading English daily serve to illustrate this tendency:

e.g. *Dear God, how come you live on so high, and never once fall down?*

Dear God, Please, I am on your side!

The relationship of man to God is a subject of profound importance. Discussion on the subject is full of intricate metaphysics. Extended further, this of course means a discussion on how to adore or worship the Lord and all the related do's and don'ts. Opinion is sharply divided on this. However we are more concerned

here with the fundamental question — faith in the existence of God.

Who has to take up the job of proving the existence of God? Is it to be a physical demonstration? Or, is it to be done through logical argumentation? The first course is automatically ruled out. Chandrasekhara Bharati, former Shankaracharya of Sringeri Pitha once said that even if God made His appearance before you, you will not accept Him. This is for the reason that He appears as other objects do! Arguments in favour of a proposition can be tackled by counter-arguments. Hence a logical proof in the matter cannot also be deemed as conclusive. However, one of the proofs for the existence of God is that given by Descartes.

Descartes says:

> I have in me the idea of God. Now, nothing can come from nothing, whatever exists must have a cause for existing. And, the cause must be at least as great as the effect. I myself cannot be the cause of the idea of God; for I am a finite, imperfect being, while the idea of God is that of a perfect, infinite being. Hence this idea must have been placed in my mind by the infinite being or God, and God must exist. Reflecting upon the idea of God, we also realize that he must be eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and the source of all goodness and truth, the creator of all things.[1]

The subtle element — that of faith — is the decisive factor in the solution of the problem. All religion is based and built on this bedrock of faith.

Shankaracharya, the greatest logician the world has seen, relies on the *Sruti*, the revealed text for the final proof or authentication of his propositions. He often quotes the *Sruti* to give weight to his statements. He has explained that the *Sruti* reveals the truth which is not apparent to us at the level of the senses. *Sruti* is *apaurusheya* (of superhuman origin) and should be the deciding factor when we are confronted with basic doubts. The Acharya has also explained that the *Sruti* does not run counter to ordinary facts of life or natural phenomena. Even if a hundred *Sruti* texts were to say that fire is cold or that it has no light, they need not be believed. Of course, the hard fact is that they do not say so!

From the teaching of Shankaracharya we are enabled to conclude that reasoning and faith are alike necessary for apprehending the truth.

It is not as if atheistic tendencies or movements are developments peculiar to modern times. Such trends were prevalent even in ancient India. The Indian school of materialism, the system of Carvaka, is referred to as *Carvaka darsana*. Carvaka is thus given the status of a philosopher or thinker. This is quite in keeping with the catholicity characteristic of the Indian tradition. The founder is per-

[1] Frank Thilly, *A History of Philosophy*, pp. 177-8.

haps Carvaka. The followers of the system are anyway known as *Carvakas*, or *lokayatas*. *Carvaka* or *Caru Vaka* may be taken to mean 'sweet-tongued'.

Disbelief in the existence of God is the essence of the *Carvaka* doctrine. The *Carvaka* doctrine rejects *Vedic* authority. There is no after-life. There is nothing like salvation which one should strive for. *Pratyaksha* (direct perception) is the only valid means of knowledge. Inference as a means of knowledge is rejected. That is, whatever is seen by us is the only truth. Nothing exists beyond this. Whatever happens in the world happens by accident. There is no higher power which controls these activities.

The weakness of the atheistic school is that it offers no alternative or substitute to the system it seeks to destroy. If man is given the freedom to act as he likes, without any kind of accountability, then, his course in life will be unpredictable. It would be like a voyage on a raft across an unchartered ocean.

However it is important that we should bear no hatred to the non-conformists. They must be given the freedom not to believe in the same way we concede the right to religious belief and practice to others. Most of them are bound to come round and turn over a new leaf at some stage or other in life.

The relevance of a discussion on atheism in a spiritual context may appear to be questionable. However the justification for this is that one's faith becomes even firmer after doubts are raised and cleared.

Shankaracharya has explained that when a proposition is presented and a doubt about it is also expressed, then, when this doubt is refuted, one's conviction on the subject matter presented becomes even firmer. This is on the analogy of driving in a peg.[2]

Bhagavan Sri Ramana dispenses with elaborate argumentation about God. In fact there is no need for arguments at all if one tries to find out one's own self. Maharshi's method of Self-enquiry is the panacea for all ills. At the end of such enquiry there is clarity and one finds that everything is the Self, including the one who embarked on the enquiry.

In the light of Maharshi's teaching one comes to the conclusion that faith in oneself, that is, in one's own Existence, pure and simple, is not different from faith in God.

Devaraja Mudaliar once raised a question about the pure materialists who deny God. What follows is a dialogue between him and Sri Bhagavan:

[2] Commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras* of Badarayana: III.iii.53. When one drives a peg into soft earth, one repeatedly pulls it out and forces it again into the ground, so that it gets firmly poised, all the more.

Devaraja: What about a pure materialist, who does not believe in God? How are we to deal with him?

Bhagavan: He will come gradually, step by step, to find out the source of 'I'. First, adversity will make him feel that there is a power beyond his control, upsetting his plans. Then, he will begin with rituals, ceremonial worship, and through *japa, kirtan, dhyana,* go on to *vichara.*[3]

It is not as if only heretics disbelieve in the existence of God. Even serious *sadhakas* can develop such lack of faith in certain circumstances.

Sri Bhagavan has given his clarification in the matter in his conversation with Swami Sambuddhananda of Ramakrishna Mission, Mumbai:

Swami: It is all right to say Self-analysis is the best thing to do. But in practice, we find a God is necessary for most people.

Bhagavan: God is of course necessary, for most people. They can go on with one, till they find out that they and God are not different.

Swami: In actual practice, *sadhakas,* even sincere ones, sometimes become dejected and lose faith in God. How to restore their faith? What should we do for them?

Bhagavan: If one cannot believe in God, it does not matter. *I suppose he believes in himself, in his own existence.* Let him find out the source from which he came.

Swami: Such a man will only say the source from which he comes are his parents.

Bhagavan: He cannot be such an ignoramus, as you started by saying he was a *sadhaka* in this line already.[4]

In reply to another question of Swami Sambuddhananda Sri Bhagavan explained the proper method for achieving Self-realisation:

Swami: What is the best means for Self-realisation?

Bhagavan: 'I exist' is the only permanent, self-evident experience of everyone. Nothing else is so self-evident (*pratyaksha*) as 'I am'. What people call 'self-evident', namely, the experience they get through the senses, is far from self-evident. The Self alone is *that. Pratyaksha* is another name for the Self. So, to do Self-analysis and be 'I am' is the only thing to do. . . .[5]

Capturing the essence of Sri Bhagavan's instruction Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai says:

Blessed be the Feet of the One [Sri Bhagavan] who says, "Do not slacken in Self-enquiry, but continue it till you achieve Abidance in the Self."[6]

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[3] *Day by Day with Bhagavan,* p. 199 (1968 edn.).

[4] *Day by Day with Bhagavan,* (1968 Edn.) pp. 198-99.

[5] *Day by Day with Bhagavan* (1968 Edn.), p.197.

[6] *Ramana Pada Malai,* Verse 16.

Maharshi's Appreciation of Mystic Poetry

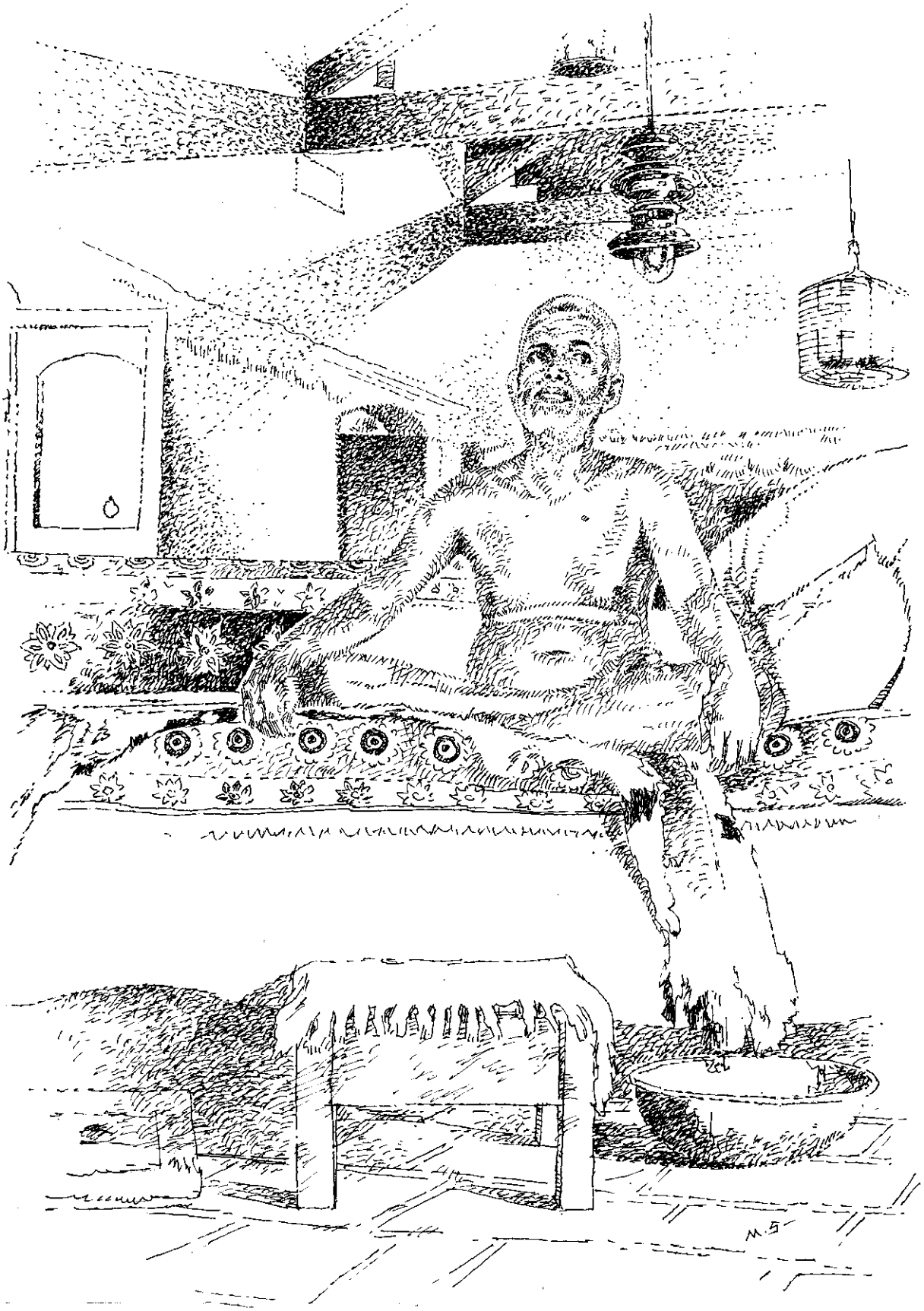
By Swami Siddheswarananda

At my request he recited certain lines from the composition of the Saint Manikyavachakar, where he speaks of the condition of the soul melted in love; hardly had the Maharshi pronounced a few lines when there was a brilliance in his face. He who rarely expresses in any outward form his inner emotion could not restrain a few silent tears. A slanting ray of the morning sun from the hillside made the scene still more vivid. A peace that passeth all understanding pervaded the whole atmosphere. For more than an hour there was perfect silence. It looked as if one of the fresco paintings of Ajanta had come to life! When the atmosphere was disturbed by a new visitor, I repeated before him, as a parallel to the verse from Manikyavachakar, the following lines from Wordsworth's *Excursion—Wanderer*.

His spirit drank the spectacle,
Sensation, soul and form all melted into him;
they swallowed up
His animal being, in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired
Rapt in still communion, that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love!

Maharshi followed very appreciatively this selection from Wordsworth and remarked to me in Malayalam-"How nicely they too have expressed these same high sentiments."

This is an excerpt from *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, published by the Ashram in 1946 in commemmoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's arrival at Arunachala. The author was then head of Sri Ramakrishna Mission, Paris.



In His Presence

By Professor K. Swaminathan

BHAGAVAN was a perfect Impersonality, like the sun in the sky or like unnoticed daylight in an inner chamber. People spoke to one another freely and frankly in his Presence, as if the figure on the couch were a statue, not a listener. It was natural to refer to him as It instead of you or he. Thus every conversation in the Old Hall turned out to be a truly Socratic dialogue; every statement was tentative and therefore poetic; no statement was dogmatic, eristic or polemical. This impersonal Being would suddenly become a Person full of *sattvic* power, highly human, charming, mother-like, who could communicate with sharp precision his own Awareness-Bliss to other persons according to their needs and moods. The sun now came down and played with us as the light of the moon to illumine the mind, or as the fire in the home to cook our food.

No wonder, the devotees differed much on who he was; in fact there were as many Bhagavans as there were devotees. In 1965 Devaraja Mudaliar and I met Mrs. Taleyarkhan and tried to persuade her to change some of her ideas on Bhagavan and his message. Her prompt, decisive reply settled the matter once for all. "My Bhagavan is my Bhagavan. He is not your Bhagavan".

Why not? We look at the firmament through our own little individual windows of perception. How can we know it in its vastness until we cease to be our petty selves? In this sense the only persons who really knew Bhagavan and taught the truth about him were the humble people who in silence served him and his devotees, and the inspired poet Muruganar who had emptied himself and become a hollow reed through which flowed the rich music of Bhagavan's manifold Being and the clear outline of his teaching.

During my many visits between 1940 and 1950 friends like K. Subrahmanyam, Minna Nuruddin, D. S. Sarma, some Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order would be with me, and other visitors too like Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, S. Duraiswami Iyer, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Dilip Kumar Roy and O. P. Ramaswami Reddiar. It was not all silent meditation or profound metaphysics.

This was serialised earlier in *The Mountain Path* between April and October 1988.

In 1940-45 the Great War was on and the cry "Quit India" rent the skies. Teachers from far and near, Dr. S. R. U. Savoor, Madan Gopal (of Jabalpur), G. V. Subbaramaiah (of Nellore), K. Subrahmanyam (of Loyola), and my poor, bewildered self, all anxious to be good shepherds to our far from docile students, wanted to know whom to follow and what to do. Bhagavan recognized and respected the uniqueness of each person and his specific predicament and gently and often indirectly taught each one his *svadharma,* his duty in his station, the *paraspara* or reciprocal obligation binding oneself and one's circle. The humble acceptance and due performance of this *svadharma* always helped and never hindered our individual and collective growth; such self-actualization through self-transcendence brings heaven's light and life to our earth and the power of *paratpara* Being into the time-space world of Becoming. *Moksha* was not escape from *vyavahara,* but its transformation through involvement in life. *Dharma* was not a discipline imposed and endured, but the enjoyment and exercise of the power of enlarged Being.

In those war years Sri Aurobindo advised all out-support to the Allies and the War effort; Gandhi prescribed individual *satyagraha;* the *volte face* of the Communists, the fanatic fury of the communalists, the common, craven clinging to one's bread and butter, added confusion to the prevailing chaos.

But here in the Ashram, there was not only peace serene, but clarity and certitude. Every one found the light to discover, and gained the strength to perform, his *svadharma.* Young men going to the Front and patriots going to jail sought and secured Bhagavan's blessings before proceeding to their chosen field of action.

When O. P. Ramaswami Reddiar asked for Bhagavan's permission to court imprisonment, the answer was a question: "Are you sure that Gandhi would approve?" When he was assured that Reddiar was only carrying out Gandhi's orders, he smiled and said, "When Gandhi obeys Rama and you obey Gandhi, it is all right. No one should say 'I fought and won freedom for my country'. Gandhi does not hate the British. He is only against foreign rule". Yes. Gandhi's fight was clean, aseptic, like a surgical operation. And even foreign rule was not our Enemy No. 1. It was the ego.

The same lesson was taught during a Michaelmas vacation when R. R. Keitahn, the Gandhian social worker, was in the Ashram. Here the lesson was not even that poverty was our Enemy No. 1. It was the ego.

A young man from Andhra walked into the Hall, folded his palms, and almost demanded Bhagavan's *anugraha* (approval) for his starting a social service centre in his town. Silence prevailed and the youngster was disappointed. Keitahn looked for a nod from the god

on the couch and proceeded to explain why the *anugraha* was not so readily forthcoming. He questioned the young man: "Are you sure you love the poor as you love your brother or sister? Do you form a society when you take your sister to the doctor as soon as she falls ill? Do you want to be an office-bearer, read the annual report and feel big? Are you really concerned over the plight of your poor neighbour?" Thus Keitahn brought out (as Bhagavan smiled his blessing) the paramount importance of loving and "identifying" with people in trouble and the ever present danger of ego boosting when service is undertaken, not as *sadhana* for self-improvement, but as a means of self-aggrandisement.

Years later, when I discovered the many gleaming golden needles hidden in the ninety hefty haystacks called the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, I remembered Keitahn's lecture and felt Bhagavan's presence in all things true and good and beautiful. Gandhi would cheerfully accept Keitahn's amendment (giving priority to "identification" and a necessary but second place to "service") to the statement in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Vol. XXXI, p. 511): *Self-realization is impossible without service of and identification with the poorest.*

And Gandhi presents again the same old, eternal, Ramana Gold when he says: "Once we have realized that this whole universe exists in God, how can there be any problem of violence and non-violence for us? We would feel even thieves and tigers to be ourselves ... It is man's nature to do good, for all selves are one. When this is realized man's ego melts away" (XXXII - 218, 280). Gandhi and Ramana agree both in asserting the spiritual equality of rich and poor and in prescribing the constant endeavour to reduce their present material disparity as the safest and surest means of maintaining the equality. The Being needs of the privileged can only be satisfied by meeting the survival needs of the others. What is common to the Maharshi and the Mahatma is best expressed in Vivekananda's words: "Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense. Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? I will go into a thousand hells cheerfully if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in *tamas*, to stand on their own feet and be men inspired by the spirit of Karma Yoga". Both *Gita Sara* and *Gita Pravesika* distil Sri Krishna's teachings: "Serve 'others' as an expression of your true Self and a means of self-fulfillment".

In Verses 26 and 27 of the *Supplement to the Forty Verses (Ulladu Narpadu)*, Bhagavan translates the instruction given to Sri Rama by his preceptor, the Sage Vasistha. The theme is the right relation between awareness and heroic action, between *moksha* and *dharma*. The paradox that has baffled many thinkers for over a century now is: How does it happen that the land that has produced an A-1 metaphysics and mythology, the land of Sankara and Ramanuja, of the *Ramayana*

and *Mahabharata*, has also managed to produce an Z-26 society, full of injustice, inequality, selfishness and cowardice?

One clear explanation is provided in verses 3, 5 and 16-30 of *Upadesa Undiyar*. Selfless and heroic action is both the seed and the fruit, the beginning and the end, of spiritual growth. These verses, like verses 21-25 of the *Supplement to the Forty Verses* are didactic and direct, and only widen the gap between the intellectuals and the masses, the "meditators" and the toilers.

In 1944 when the proofs of the third edition of *Ulladu Narpadu* were being corrected in his Presence, some of us (scrupulous scholars) found fault with the introductory note of WHO (Lakshmana Sarma): "To the question how the *sadhaka* (aspirant) is to behave in the world till he succeeds in attaining *jnana*, the answer is given in the two following verses taken from the *Yoga Vasistha*."

The two verses may be summed up thus: "Holding firmly at heart to the truth of your Being, play like a hero your part in the world-stage, inwardly calm and detached, but assuming zeal and joy, excitement and aversion, initiative and effort, and performing outward actions, appropriate to your particular role in various situations." Now we (fine fellows and fully qualified college teachers!) pointed out the obvious absurdity of the Pudukottai Lawyer's suggestion that Sri Rama, *avatar* of Vishnu and *Nitya mukta*, needed this teaching. "Who has these doubts?" enquired Bhagavan. Someone mentioned my name and then the cool bright beam of his glance pierced my eyes as he said smiling. "Look. It is for you. (*Paar, Unakkuttaan.*)" This teaching was for me!

This one moment solved for me a whole multitude of problems, personal, philosophical and social.

My father's chosen God was Sri Rama and my mother's Hanuman. They had both died years before and the old familiar world of *dharma* (with no mention of *moksha*) was half-forgotten and I had been feeling rather rootless in this strange new milieu of meditation, self-inquiry and all that. And now while at the humdrum job of proof-correction, Bhagavan planted me back finely in my ancestral soil. I was told gently but clearly, "The oasis is a nice place to rest in, but not your permanent home. Also remember, there is a way of taking the oasis into the desert, of making more and more of the desert a garden green. What's wrong with poetry? Does it not work in the world and transform all life in earth into a poem? Why not speak and listen to the heart rather than the head?"

Sri Rama, the *mukta*, enacts the poem of his earthly life, playing his heroic roles as son, brother, husband, ruler. Poetry can not only be written and read; it can also be lived and enjoyed. The line that divides the aesthetic and the practical is (like the equator) imaginary. What after all is a poem? An expression of disinterested joy, an experience of someone else's

agony or ecstasy as if it were one's own; a momentary manifestation in word or deed of our eternal Being.

Bhagavan was a perfect *rasajna* and with his high authority taught again the lesson I had learnt from my teacher, D. S. Sarma, that literature provides a safe and pleasant two-way bridge between *paramartha* and *vyavahara*.

Bhagavan listened like a child to passages from Shakespeare's plays and Keats's letters and quickly and convincingly revealed the universal truth in each flower unique in its own beauty. On Keats's letter on "negative capability" his passing comment was: "So there are *Upanishads* in English as in Sanskrit." The nightingale whose song Keats heard (stanza i) and the immortal bird not born for death (stanza vii) are the same two birds mentioned in the *Upanishad*, one eating the fruit, the other looking on. After a passage from Shakespeare was read, discussed and duly praised, he uttered words to this effect: "The Self as joy alone exists. As Shakespeare it enjoyed writing this and now as you, it enjoys reading it."

How literature enables us to enjoy Eternity in time and lifts us unawares from time into Eternity came out clearly in a dialogue between Mahamahopadhyaya Swaminatha Ayyar and Bhagavan. The ripe old scholar complained, "People tell us to give up *patru* (attachment). But I am not able to give up *Tamil-patru*." Bhagavan promptly countered, "But who asked you to give up *Siva-patru* or *Tamil-patru*?" What is Siva but poetry, the creator and creation of *ananda*?

No wonder then that Bhagavan not only permitted and encouraged Muruganar in his copious outpourings but also often joined him in playing the grand game of rhyming and chiming in words that double a common joy. Was he not the sole begetter of thousands of marvellous poems by Muruganar and so many others?

I Corinthians, Ch. 13, was read; the variant versions "faith, hope, and charity" and "faith, hope and love" were compared. Why should charity be called "Christian love"? And so on. And finally Bhagavan in all innocence asked: "Is this poem of praise on the Heart by Jesus or by a disciple?" The answer, of course, was: "St. Paul." The comment was: "Now this is the purest *advaita*. If the pupil said this, what would the Master say? Heart (*Ullam*), Being (*Ulladu*), Siva, *anbu* (Charity, love), all are One and That alone exists!"

Gandhi too was very fond of this passage, wanted it translated into Gujarati and memorized and so on. Bhagavan often equated Gandhi with Hanuman, the humble and heroic servant of Sri Rama. In Keats's Nightingale Ode, the witness-bird is immortal, the bird that sang is of course dead. In the history of this *punyabhumi*, the symbol creates the actual and this in turn becomes a symbol. Poetry lives and works in the world and changes

life into a poem. Can there be a nobler poem than the Mahatma's earthly career? Bhagavan remarked once: "We say that Hanuman is *Chiranjivi* (immortal). It does not mean that a certain monkey goes on living for ever and ever. It only means that there will always be on earth someone who serves Rama as your Gandhi does now."

For the temporal (upside down) tree called *dharma*, the seed and the fruit is timeless *moksha*. The *sadhana* of the seeker is the *lakshana* of the *siddha*. Egoless action is the disciplined exercise of the seeker; it is the spontaneous behaviour of the realized person. We enjoy aesthetically the bliss of the *jivanmukta*. He enjoys aesthetically our struggles, triumphs and failures (for us real and for him illusory). The ego can never know *moksha*; the Self can never know bondage. The lovers of poetry become egoless because they *enjoy being otherselves*. Read the *Ramayana*, work hard and honestly, humbly, like Hanuman, and all shall be well with you and the world.

In the early forties Professor Madan Gopal (of Jubbulpore) was a frequent visitor to the Ashram. He knew German and would translate into English, articles in German. In one such article the famous psychologist Carl Jung had contrasted Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Bhagavan and saw in this succession the progressive advance from *bhakti* to *jnana*. On hearing this Sri Bhagavan promptly sat erect and protested against the comparison, saying: "When one has reached the mountain top, no matter from what side or by what path, one knows and understands all other paths. What is there that Sri Ramakrishna did not know?"

In like manner he deprecated comparisons (attempted by Prof. G.V. Subbaramiah and other devotees) between himself as a *jnani* and the Mahatma as "a mere *karma yogi*." The eye that sees and the hand that works are alike organs of one and the same Eternal Goodness. He saw only one *adhyatma sakti* working everywhere. Different persons perform different functions. Arranging them in an order of merit is "the mischief of the ego."

Sri Bhagavan preferred to speak in Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam. But he corrected mistranslation in English and freely used where needed, phrases like *regressus ad infinitum* and "automatic divine activity." This latter phrase he used while explaining *prarabdha* through the analogy of the electric fan which goes on moving slowly after it is switched off, before it finally stops. And he added smiling, "But you can stop it straightaway with a stick if you want."

A frequent topic of discussion, especially when Muruganar was in the Hall, was the peculiar power of some Tamil words in helping one's *sadhana*. As stated at p-91 of *Ramana Maharshi*, published by the National Book Trust, New Delhi, the first invocatory stanza of the *Forty Verses* dwells lovingly on the Tamil root *ul* common to being, thinking, heart and inner

space, all connoting indivisible oneness and wholeness. The verb *ul* (to be) admits of no past or future tense and stands for Being beyond time as well as in the present time. The repeated use of the words *Ulladu* (that which is) *ullu* (think) and *ullam* (heart) pulls the mind to pure Being Awareness. Likewise the pronouns *naan* ('I' the singular and *naam*) and *taan* (itself, the Self) force the Tamil speaker unawares to stay tethered to one's universal Being as all-inclusive Awareness. Sri Bhagavan and Muruganar love to play on the words *naan, naam* ('we' meaning 'you and 'I'). Sri Bhagavan laughingly claimed Nammalwar as "our own, the Advaitin's own", not merely 'theirs' (the Vaishnavite's alone). Far from differing from or being opposed to *advaita*, Vaishnavism or *visishtadvaita* is "specialised, modified, applied *advaita*, Being as Becoming or action." When someone insisted on the separateness of the two modes of *advaita*, he said: "You may claim proudly that you live in Mylapore, not Madras. But where is Mylapore if not in Madras?" And have not the *Alwars* themselves sung of the oneness of Siva and Vishnu and recognized both identity and difference between devotee and God? Does not Tirumizhisai Alwar rejoice in this dual role: "Myself you are and yet you are my Master too, O Rama!"

Differing from Malayalam which has adopted *yaan* ('I' as distinct from 'you') even in the nominative case, Tamil uses the forms excluding the second person only in the oblique cases, Tamil uses *naan* (the singular of *naam*, the inclusive 'we') in the nominative case also. It is therefore easy and natural for Sri Bhagavan to assert and all Tamils to recognize *unarve naamaai ulam*. ("We are all awareness").

While in English we speak of the first, second and third persons, in Tamil we speak rather of "Places", as all persons are one Person in essence. The person speaking (I), the person spoken to (you) and the person or thing spoken of (he, she, it) may occupy three different places, but they are not totally different persons. All beings are one Being. The personal pronouns are named and function in Tamil to distinguish places rather than persons. "*Tanmai*" (Being as such, suchness, essence) is the first person. "*Munnilai*" (standing in front, what I see before me) is the second person and "*Padarkkai*" (extension) is the third person. This usage implies that 'I' or the Self is the origin, the starting point and permanent core of all being.

To descend from the sublime to the merely personal. On December 3, 1948, Sri Bhagavan, glancing as usual through the morning newspaper, remarked in the hearing of those present in the Hall, "Look, our Swaminathan has been promoted as Principal of the Muhammadan College." This notice of and reference to a news item, duly reported to me by several devotees, amounted to a gracious blessing to which I owed the very happy and successful tenure of a difficult job. Apart from the willing cooperation of staff and students, I take it as his power-

ful, prevenient grace that provided for me good friends in Vivekananda College, Mylapore, New College, Royapetta and Government Colleges in Lahore and Dacca, so that I could oblige all parties who came to me for help!

Another thrilling incident is worth recalling. One afternoon in 1949, two highly esteemed senior devotees, Dr. V. Srinivasa Rao and Mr. T. P. Ramachandra Iyer, stepped into my house, *Dharmalayam*, formally "prostrated" before me and presented to me two copies (fresh from the press) of *Anma Bodham*, Sri Bhagavan's Tamil rendering of Adi Sankara's Sanskrit work. Speaking with unusual respect they said, "Bhagavan wanted us to go and give these copies to you. They contain some corrections in his own hand."

How did I deserve this shower of grace? A few weeks earlier, my friend Minna Nuruddin (a good Tamil and Sanskrit scholar) had gone to the Ashram and given to Sri Bhagavan a copy of M. N.'s Tamil translation in eight-line stanzas of *Atma Bodha*. Sri Bhagavan had done many years earlier a translation in terse *venbas* of most of the 68 verses of the Sanskrit treatise. He now had the old note book dug up from the Ashram archives, revised and completed the translation and had it printed and brought out as his last little booklet. And he now sends me these two copies, one for me and the other for Minna!

During August 1946 devotees were busy organizing functions in the Ashram and producing a Souvenir to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Sri Bhagavan's arrival in Tiruvannamalai on September 1, 1896.

Sri Bhagavan took keen interest in the Souvenir. N. Balarama Reddi, K. Subrahmanyam (of Vivekananda College), A. Devaraja Mudaliar and other friends met often in Madras and saw the volume through the Press. However, Sri Bhagavan did not like (though he meekly submitted to) the "big fuss" made in the Ashram on that day. Discussing on August 14, the arrangements made for the functions on September 1, Mudaliar threw the blame (as he told me later) on me. And Sri Bhagavan said something which showed that he was gracious enough to notice my absence as well as my frequent visits. He said, "Yes, Yes. He does all this. But does he ever come here during *Kartigai* or *Jayanti*? He comes only when there is no crowd!" This was perfectly true as I avoided red-letter days and preferred quiet seasons when Sri Bhagavan was most accessible and free to talk.

I dwell on August 14, 1946 and December 3, 1948 when I was in Madras and Sri Bhagavan thought and spoke of me in the Ashram, because in truth "presence" (even mine) is not bodily presence and Sri Bhagavan's potent presence was often felt outside Tiruvannamalai and after April, 1950.

Apart from the weekly meetings of Ramana Kendras and Ramana Bhakta

Sabhas, there were occasions when two or three met and talked of something deeply moving and there he was "in the midst of us". T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar was fond of Tamil poetry and during his visits to *Dharmalayam* was delighted to discover that his favourite *Venbas* from Guhai Namassivayar and Karaikkal Ammaiyar were often quoted by Sri Bhagavan and his devotees. Is not Siva present in every moment of *ananda*?

One early morning in January, 1959 I was shivering in the freezing cold in the aerodrome in Minsk. A lady, standing beside me and trying to cheer me up, took out from her handbag a photo of Sri Bhagavan and asked me, "Do you know this Indian sage?" In fact there were devotees of Sri Bhagavan in Warsaw and Prague.

These were casual "appearances". But Sri Bhagavan was a constant *upadrashta, anumanta, bharta, bhokta* (observer, encourager, sustainer, enjoyer) in my many meetings and dealings with fellow-devotees like Muruganar, Viswanatha Swami, Sadhu Om, Osborne and A.R. Natarajan.

When I met Muruganar for the last time, he composed for me a *kural* couplet, a veritable passport to the whole world of Sri Bhagavan with its infinite inner and outer dimensions.[1]

Through Osborne too Sri Bhagavan spoke to me clearly once. In reporting for the *Mountain Path* the proceedings at an annual meeting of Ramana Kendra, Delhi (held in a Madrasi School Hall and attended by hundreds of devotees) I mentioned the "miracle" performed by the Chairman, Sri Panrimalai Swamigal. He showered flowers into my outstretched upper cloth and they became ashes before a thousand eyes. While sending the typed report, I noted in the margin of this paragraph, "Print or omit as you deem fit." Osborne cut it out and wrote to me, "Don't you know that Sri Bhagavan wouldn't like it mentioned at all?"

Sri Bhagavan speaks through many voices to those who have ears to hear. Silence, of course, is his most moving unheard melody, the silence of the starry sky, the splendour of sunrise and sunset. But he also utters words and tells us to utter words which are *un-udvega-karam, satyam, priyam, hitam* (unexciting, true, pleasing and beneficial). Indeed Bhagavan's presence is everywhere, as light and bliss and as the darkness and sorrow which remind us of light and bliss. He is our one unfailing friend, Guru, Self and God. He shows the way and walks with us throughout the journey of our life.

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[1] *Seerana satgatiyach cherndan idayathu Narayanane namakku.* (This has two meanings.)

a) *idayathu* as adjective qualifying Narayana gives the sense: Narayana within the Heart has come before us as the noble path of righteousness.

b) *idayathu* as adverb modifying *serndan* gives the sense: As the noble path of righteousness Narayana has come to us and in the Heart abides. Thus Narayana is both our inner Being and our outer Becoming and Behaviour.

As guru, God and Self, Sri Bhagavan is none other than Narayana, the manifestation of the Timeless in our time for our benefit.

The Mountain Path

By Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

Freewill is, at best, a lampless cell in which we languish
Behind invisible bars and lone lily pine
For a ray of merciful light... All human anguish
Serves as the dark nourishment of the Divine.

Learn to ramble with life, old master rambler
Through untrodden forest-glades and planes and alleys
'Twixt mountain and mountain: each footfall of yours a gambler
Wagering away tall summits and low-lying valleys.

Ramble within, it affords prolific sight-seeing,
Graph of landscape blending its hues psychedelic
Illumined with consuming by the Master of humorous being
Dappling the vision with glow-stains soft and angelic.

Rooted in movement prepetual, moving in rootedness,
Challenge to paradox that meets with permanent scorning
On a plane of evolving where multi-fruitedness
Is one with a branch-bared tree as night with morning.

Man is a wound of God and God of man,
Twin wounds turned one forevermore to burn.
Creation is a tired caravan
Returning to the land of no-return;
Shadow of death across a lifetime haunts us
Driving us to despair, offspring of blindness;
Life is not as we want it but as it wants us,
Dragging us between kindness and unkindness.

Drik Drisya Viveka of Shankaracharya

(Translated from Sri Bhagavan's Tamil rendering)

The invocatory verse and introduction are by Sri Bhagavan.

Invocation

Oh thou divine Shankara,
Thou art the Subject,
That has knowledge
Of subject and object.
Let the subject in me be destroyed
As subject and object.
For thus in my mind arises
The light as the single Siva.

Introduction

'*Brahman* is only one and non dual' declare the *Srutis*. Since *Brahman* is the sole reality, according to *advaita*, how is it that *Brahman* is not apparent to us, whereas the *prapancha* (world, i.e. non-*Brahman*) is so vivid? Thus questions the advanced *sadhaka*.

In one's own Self, which is no other than *Brahman*, there is a mysterious power known as *avidya* (ignorance) which is beginningless and not separate from the Self. Its characteristics are, veiling and presentation of diversity. Just as the pictures in a cinema, though not visible either in sunlight or in darkness, become visible in a spot of light in the midst of darkness, so in the darkness of ignorance there appears the reflected light of the Self, illusory and scattered, taking the form of thought. This is the primal thought known as the ego, *jiva* or *karta* (doer), having the mind as the medium of its perceptions. The mind has a store of latent tendencies which it projects as the object of a shadow-show in the waking and dream states. This show, however, is mistaken for real by the *jiva*. The veiling aspect of the mind first hides the real nature of the Self and then presents the objective world to view. Just as the waters of the ocean do not seem different from the waves, so also for the duration of objective phenomena, the Self, though itself the sole being, is made to appear not different from them. Turn away from the delusion caused by latent tendencies and false notions of interior and exterior. By such constant practice of *sahaja samadhi*, the veiling power vanishes and the non-dual Self is left over to shine forth as *Brahman* itself. This is the whole secret of the *advaita* doctrine as taught by the master to the advanced *sadhaka*. Here the same teaching is contained, which Sri Shankaracharya has expounded concisely without any elaboration, in the following text.

Reproduced from *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*.

The Text

All our perception pertains to the non-Self. The immutable Seer is indeed the Self. All the countless scriptures proclaim only discrimination between Self and non-Self.

The world we see, being seen by the eye, is *drisya* (object); the eye which sees it is *drik* (subject). But the eye, being perceived by the mind is *drisya* (object) and the mind which sees it is *drik* (subject). The mind, with its thoughts perceived by the Self, is *drisya* (object) and the Self is *drik* (subject). The Self cannot be *drisya* (object), not being perceived by anything else. The forms perceived are various, blue and yellow, gross and subtle, tall and short, and so on; but the eye that sees them remains one and the same. Similarly, the varying qualities of the eye, such as blindness, dullness and keenness and of the ears and other organs, are perceived by the mind singly. So, too, the various characteristics of the mind, such as desire, determination, doubt, faith, want of faith, courage, want of courage, fear, shyness, discrimination, good and bad, are all perceived by the Self singly. This Self neither rises nor sets, neither increases nor decays. It shines of its own luminosity. It illumines everything else without the need for aid from other sources.

Buddhi, as the sum total of the inner organs, in contact with the reflected consciousness has two aspects. One is called egoity and the other mind. This contact of the *buddhi* with the reflected consciousness is like the identity of a red hot iron ball with fire. Hence the gross body passes for a conscious entity. The contact establishing identity between the ego and the reflected Consciousness, is of three kinds.

1. The identification of the ego with the reflected Consciousness is natural or innate.

2. The identification of the ego with the body is due to past *karma.*

3. The identification of the ego with the witness is due to ignorance.

The natural or innate contact continues as long as the *buddhi,* but on realization of the Self it proves to be false. The third mentioned contact is broken when it is discovered by experience that there is no sort of contact of anything at all with the Self, which is Being. The second mentioned contact, that born of past *karma,* ceases to exist on the destruction of innate tendencies (*vasanas*). In the deep sleep state, when the body is inert, the ego is fully merged (in the causal ignorance). The ego is half manifest in the dream state, and its being fully manifest is the waking state. It is the mode or modification of thought (with its latent tendencies) that creates the inner world of dreams in the dream state and the outer world in the waking state. The subtle body, which is the material cause of mind and ego, experiences the three states and also birth and death.

Maya of the causal body has its powers of projecting *(rajas)* and veiling *(tamas).* It is the projecting power that creates everything from the subtle body to the gross universe of names and forms. These are

produced in the *Sat Chit Ananda* (Being-Consciousness-Bliss) like foam in the ocean. The veiling power operates in such a way that internally the distinction between subject and object cannot be perceived, and externally that between *Brahman* and the phenomenal world. This indeed is the cause of *samsara.* The individual with his reflected light of Consciousness is the subtle body existing in close proximity with the Self that is the *vyavaharika* (the empirical Self). This individual character of the empirical Self appears in the witness or *sakshi* also through false superimposition. But on the extinction of the veiling power (*tamas*), the distinction between witness and the empirical Self becomes clear; and the superimposition also drops away. Similarly, *Brahman* shines as the phenomenal world of names and forms only through the effect of the veiling power which conceals the distinction between them. When the veiling ends, the distinction between the two is perceived, for none of the activities of the phenomenal world exist in *Brahman.*

Of the five characteristics, Being, Consciousness, Bliss, name and form, the first three pertain to *Brahman* and name and form to the world. The three aspects of Being, Consciousness and Bliss exist equally in the five elements of ether, air, fire, water and earth and in *devas* (gods), animals, men, etc., whereas the names and forms are different. Therefore, be indifferent to names and forms, concentrate on Being-Consciousness-Bliss and constantly practise *samadhi* (identity with *Brahman)* within the heart or outside.

This practice of *samadhi* (identity with *Brahman*) is of two kinds: *savikalpa* (in which the distinction between knower, knowledge and known is not lost) and *nirvikalpa* (in which the above distinction is lost). *Savikalpa samadhi* again is of two kinds: that which is associated with words (sound), and meditation on one's own consciousness as the witness of thought forms such as desire, which is *savikalpa samadhi* (internal), associated with (cognizable) objects. Realizing one's Self as 'I am Being-Consciousness-Bliss without duality, unattached, self effulgent', is *savikalpa samadhi* (internal) associated with words (sound). Giving up both objects and sound forms of the aforesaid two modes of *samadhi* and being completely absorbed in the Bliss experienced by the realization of the Self is *nirvikalpa samadhi* (internal). In this state steady abidance is obtained, like the unflickering flame of a light kept in a place free from wind. So also, in the heart, becoming indifferent to external objects of name and form and perceiving only Being of (or as) *Sat,* is *savikalpa samadhi* (external) associated with objects; and being aware continually of that *Sat* (true existence) as the unbroken single essence of *Brahman* is *savikalpa samadhi* (external) associated with words (sound). After these two experiences, Being, which is uninterrupted like the waveless ocean, is *nirvikalpa samadhi* (external). One who meditates should spend his time perpetually in these six kinds of *samadhi.* By these, the attachment to the body is destroyed and the mind that perpetually abides in

the Supreme Self (*paramatman*) wherever it may wander, is everywhere spontaneously in *samadhi*. By this constant practice of *samadhi*, the supreme Self, who is both highest and lowliest, who encompasses *Paramatman* as well as *jivatman* is directly experienced, and then the knot of the heart is loosened; all doubts are destroyed and all *karmas* (activities) cease too.

Of the three modes of individual being, the limited self (as in deep sleep), the empirical self (as in the waking state) and the dreaming self, only the individual limited by the deep sleep state is the true Self *(paramarthika)*. Even he is but an idea. The Absolute alone is the true Self. In reality and by nature he is *Brahman* itself, only superimposition creates the limitations of individuality in the Absolute. It is to the *paramarthika jiva* that the identity of *Tat twam asi* (That thou art) and other great texts of the *Upanishads* applies, and not to any other. The great *maya* (the superimposition without beginning) with her veiling and projecting power *(tamas* and *rajas)* veils the single indivisible *Brahman* and, in that *Brahman*, creates the world and individuals. The individual *(jiva)*, a concept of the empirical self in the *buddhi*, is indeed the actor and enjoyer and the entire phenomenal world is its object of enjoyment. From time without beginning, till the attainment of liberation, individual and world have an empirical existence. They are both empirical. The empirical individual appears to have the power of sleep in the shape of the veiling and projecting powers. It is associated with Consciousness. The power covers first the individual empirical self and the cognized universe, and then these are imagined in dream. These dream perceptions and the individual who perceives them are illusory, because they exist only during the period of dream experience. We affirm their illusory nature, because on waking up from dream no one sees the dream, no one sees the dream objects. The dreaming self experiences the dream world as real, while the empirical self experiences the empirical world as real but, when the *paramarthika jiva* is realized, knows it to be unreal. The *paramarthika jiva*, as distinguished from those of the waking and dream experiences, is identical with *Brahman*. He has no 'other'. If he does see any 'other', he knows it to be illusory.

The sweetness, liquidity, and coldness of water are characteristics present equally in waves and foam. So, too, the Being-Consciousness-Bliss character of the Self (the *paramarthika)* is present in the empirical self and through him in the dream self also, because of their being only illusory creations in the Self. The foam with its qualities, such as coldness, subsides in the waves, the waves with their characteristics, such as liquidity, subside in the water, and the ocean alone exists as at first. Similarly, the dream self and its objects are absorbed in the empirical self; then the empirical world with its characteristics is absorbed in the *paramarthika* and, as at first, Being-Consciousness-Bliss which is *Brahman* shines alone.

The Thought of Albert Einstein
(Letter to a Child)

A child in the sixth grade in a Sunday School in New York City, with the encouragement of her teacher, wrote to Einstein in Princeton on 19 January 1936 asking him whether scientists pray, and if so what they pray for. Einstein replied as follows on 24 January 1936.

Einstein's Reply

I have tried to respond to your question as simply as I could. Here is my answer.

Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by laws of nature, and therefore this holds for the actions of people. For this reason, a research scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, i.e. by a wish addressed to a supernatural Being.

However, it must be admitted that our actual knowledge of these laws is only imperfect and fragmentary, so that, actually, the belief in the existence of basic all-embracing laws in Nature also rests on a sort of faith. All the same this faith has been largely justified so far by the success of scientific research.

But, on the other hand, everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe — a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we, with our modest powers, must feel humble. In this way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a special sort, which is indeed quite different from the religiosity of someone more naive.

(It is worth mentioning that this letter was written a decade after the advent of Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy and the probabilistic interpretation of quantum mechanics with its denial of strict determinism.)

Excerpted from *Albert Einstein, the Human Side*: Princeton University Press (1979).

From the *Tulsi Ramayana* (*Kishkinda Kanda*)

Translation by Kamta Charan Shrivatsava

We give below the translation of a passage from the Ramacharitamanasa, *otherwise known as* Tulsi Ramayana.

It is a rainy day in Kishkinda, the land of the monkeys. Sri Rama has crowned Sugriva king of the monkeys and in a mood of relaxation addresses his younger brother, Lakshmana. The observations are profound and similes drawn from nature make them more interesting.

Thunderous clouds thick in the heavens detonate
My heart is all a-tremble by love's absence desolate.
The lightning flash does not in the clouds remain.
Ill endures like the love of ignoble men.
The clouds earth prone break into rain
Give in like the wise when they knowledge gain.
The assaults of the raindrops the hills endure
As saints the vituperations of the impure.
The rain swollen streams with an abandon go
Like the ill bred when a little wealth they know.
Water puddles mixed with earth foul and muddy become
As the souls to illusion's enticements succumb.
The drops of water swelling into tanks
As virtues come to the noble ranks.
The waters of the rivers to the sea course
Rest there like the soul without remorse.
Grass crowding on the green earth confounds the way
Like contentious hypocrisy overlaying what the scriptures say.

The frogs all around please with their croaking note
As boys intoning the *Vedas* in groups by rote.
Many a tree new leave's accretes
Like the initiate's heart when it discrimination greets.
'Ark' and 'Jawas' hot weather plants lose their leaves
As in kingdoms well ruled evil nothing achieves.
No dust the eye of search can see
As where obtains fell anger no virtue can ever be.
With crops rich-blest the earth in glory shines
Like the opulence of the benevolent which to others inclines.
The glow worms in clusters the dark nights crowd
As though in session sit the proud.
Bounds and bridges break down by the long heavy rains
As when free women go wrong if nothing restrains.
Skilful farmers are ridding their fields of all weeds
As wise men folly, passion and pride with their deeds.

WHO ARE YOU, RAMANA!

With the post arrived a composition from the pen of Chinta Dikshitulu, in Telugu, entitled "In the first place, Who are you, Ramana?" After perusing the letters, Bhagavan asked Balaram to read it out in the hall and the same was done. The gist of the paper is : "You ask everybody who puts a question 'Who are you that put this question?' But who are you? There is sufficient justification for one to regard you as Krishna, or as Skanda, or as the Goddess who became merged in Arunachala as Ardhanariswara or again as Dakshinamurti. In fact we can go on imagining as so many other gods also. Again, when you sit with your palms turned to the fire by your side, you look like giving *abhaya* (*i.e.*, protection from fear). Now, is it only to those in the hall you are giving *abhaya* or to all in the world? It must be the latter. For you have come into the world to give *abhaya* to all."

— *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, **entry for 27-2-46.**

M.S.

Tirujnana Sambandar: Fountain of Knowledge and Devotion

By I.S. Madugula

TIRUJNANASAMBANDAR, perhaps the most prominent of the Nayanar trinity, was noted not only for his poetic output but also for his intense and all-pervasive devotion to the one Lord Siva in whom abides everything and who abides in everything. Siva, the Ancient One, commanded reverence even from Brahma and Vishnu. They humbly sought His help when cosmic crises arose. Sambandar absorbed this esoteric knowledge of Siva even before he could properly walk. The boy saint was affectionately noticed by Shankaracharya as *Dravida sisu* in his magnificent lyric, *Soundarya Lahari*. Bhagavan Sri Ramana was fond of narrating episodes from his life (such as his trek through the wooded hills of Arunachala and Siva's robbery of the pilgrim group).

The details of Sambandar's short life are simple enough. Sambandar, born as the son of Sivapada Hridayar as a result of the latter's piety and austerities, is the cynosure of all eyes in Seerkazhi on the banks of the Kaveri. At age three, he follows his father to the temple pond where, missing his father's briefly submerged body, and probably also feeling hungry, he starts wailing loudly. Siva and his consort passing overhead at the time take pity on the boy and the Divine Mother hands him a cup of her breast milk. This is the precursor to his precocious awakening. He drinks it and is happy, but gets into trouble with his father who questions the source of the milk dripping from his mouth. Sambandar now breaks into mellifluous poetry and thus begins a life of true devotion and true knowledge.

The awakened spirit expressed itself in divine song. The Kaveri river was transformed into an overflowing stream of *bhakti* that cascaded toward the infinite Sea of Consciousness. The Siva of Seerkazhi was the Siva of Arunachala and of every shrine in between, and each one of these lords resided firmly in the tiny heart of the child. It was obvious to everyone who witnessed the phenomenon that Sambandar was an embodiment of *Siva jnana*, a corporeal manifestation of the *Vedic Purusha*. Witness his spontaneous hymn to the Lord of Thillai:

> Oh, Lord, out of Thy Grace, I have been enabled to visualize with my

own senses, the great bliss, *Sivabhoga*, to be *experienced only inwardly.*[1]

This is *bhakti* internalized, which is the same as knowledge, even as faith externalized is the same as devotion.

He visits every Siva shrine in the Kaveri region either on his father's shoulders or in a palanquin for the next thirteen years, meeting many other Saiva saints including the aging Appar, performing a variety of miracles, and establishing the superiority of the *Vedic* religion over Jainism and Buddhism. He composes the prayers known as the *Thevaram*, is venerated by one and all as the great saviour, symbolically marries a girl chosen by his father, and disappears along with her and his entourage into a blaze of light in the Nallur Siva temple. His devotion was unwavering and single-minded and his God-realization identical to the *jnani's* Self-realization.

Sambandar's hymns and songs were always based on the *Vedas* and their inner import. His so-called miracles were just natural occurrences as far as he was concerned, because he had Siva on his side and his prayers were always meant to help others. He impressed upon his senior contemporary Appar with his sincerity and devotion. His Pandyan hosts were impressed with his true knowledge of Reality as opposed to that of the Jain groups (and later the Buddhists at Bodhimangai) whose false premises militated against a real understanding of the human predicament. Sambandar exclaimed that the Lord was the Supreme Truth, the Ultimate Reality, the True Self in everyone and everything. The saint of Seerkazhi at once established a true blend of faith and knowledge, and finally declared that the love of that Lord would be true wisdom.[2]

In general, the path of devotion is commended for those who find it hard to practise the *jnana marga*. The devotee wants a tangible figure, real or mythical, to hold on to, a figure with attributes, or *saguna Brahman*. The more accomplished practitioners or those who are born with enlightenment do not need such support. They know and experience in their heart of hearts the Ultimate Reality as attributeless Supreme Consciousness. That does not mean that they eschew *bhakti*. Far from it, their *bhakti* is a product of their *jnana*. Sri Ramakrishna was totally devoted to Kali all his life as his and the universal Mother, yet when he was possessed of pure knowledge and understood the illusory nature of personal deities, he was prepared to chop off the idol's head! Prahlada's Vishnu did not have a physical locus; He suffused every person and object with his living presence. Ignorance of this aspect of the Lord, coupled with arrogance and self-conceit led to Hiranyakasipu's downfall. Sri Bhagavan's enlightenment by his own account had nothing to do with a certain

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[1] *Periyapuranam* (Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, (1997), p. 169.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

god; it was the pure effulgence of the Spirit. Yet he wrote numerous verses on Arunachala whom he addressed as his Father. In other words, saints of the highest order are not just blind, obstinate devotees (*muda bhaktas*) of the Lord. Sri Bhagavan stressed this point on any number of occasions. When Dilip Kumar Roy of the Aurobindo Ashram suggested that there might be a possible conflict between the paths of knowledge and devotion, he said:

> There is really nothing contradictory in such teachings. When for instance a follower of *bhakti marga* declares that *bhakti* is the best, he really means by the word *bhakti* what the *jnana marga* man calls *jnana*. There is no difference in the state or its description by attributes or transcendence of attributes. Only different thinkers have used different words.[3]

On a subsequent occasion, Bhagavan again told him:

> *Bhakti* is *jnana mata*, i.e. the mother of *jnana*.[4]

When Sambandhar imbibed the milk of the Divine Mother, he at once became heir both to Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. His subsequent life was an inspiring amalgam of the two strands of his saintly psyche.

The ancient sage Narada, the devotee nonpareil, starts his little treatise on devotion with the statement that devotion is the supreme love of God.[5] In the sixth *sutra* he goes on to assert that after knowing the raptures of devotion, one becomes intoxicated with love of God *and finds all joy in his own Self*. In *Sutra* 28, he notes that some sages hold that *jnana* alone leads one to devotion. In the next *sutra* the interdependence of knowledge and devotion is mentioned as being the view of some others. Having proclaimed in *Sutra* 25 that devotion is better than *karma, jnana,* and *yoga,* as his view, he clarifies that the devotion he is talking about is the devotion to the Eternal Truth (*trisatya*) that is God. Then he goes on to list the controls and observances to be followed by a devotee and his total surrender to the Lord, all of which are common to all paths to liberation.

Two of the four classes of devotees listed in the *Bhagavadgita* are characterized by knowledge or a quest for knowledge, indicating that knowledge of God is knowledge of the Self, which is the highest goal of *advaita*.[6]

It is interesting that Sri Bhagavan places the verse defining *bhakti* at the top of the ten that he selects from *Sivanandalahari*:[7]

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[3] *Day by Day with Bhagavan*: A. Devaraja Mudaliar, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai (1995), pp. 27-28.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[5] *Narada Bhakti Sutras*: Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta (1999), p. 21.

[6] *Jijnasu* and *jnani*, the other two being *arto* and *artharthi*. 7.16

[7] This is no. 61 in the Ramakrishna Mission edition. Translation from *The Mountain Path*, Aradhana Issue, 2002, p. 54.

> Just as in this world the *ankola* seeds approach their tree, the needle approaches the magnet, the chaste wife her lord, the creeper the tree, and the river the sea, even so when the current of thought approaches the two lotus feet of the Lord and abides there always, that is termed *bhakti*.

It is illuminating to note the transformation or progression of faith in different saints. Sankara was a *jnani*, an uncompromising *advaitin*. Yet, he wrote exceptionally moving and profound devotional poems. Sri Bhagavan did the same. Sri Ramakrishna was a simple *bhakta* with an ability to assume the known personalities of various household gods who, later on, was initiated into the highest form of *advaita* by the wandering monk, Totapuri. He then sublimated his *bhakti* into profound knowledge through a process of substituting the attributeless Brahman for deities with attributes. The attainment of spiritual union remained the same — only the symbols were removed and the process universalized. The deity with a locus was now all-pervasive and cosmic. Sambandar was a *jnana-misra-bhakta*, passing through the stages of *vaidhi* and *raganuga* devotion, and merging into the Divine. He was an exception to the tradition of pure devotion to a visible icon. The icon in the temple was the icon in his heart, the Self. Never once does he seem to forget that profoundest of equations.

The lesson for us is simply that the devotee substitutes the deity for Brahman while the sage may choose to work in the reverse direction. It is only natural that we have a choice, initially, of establishing an icon with attributes in our inmost hearts, an icon with which we identify ourselves, pray to it, play with it and use it as our constant companion almost at a physical level. But when we realize that we cannot confine that potent force, that fiery light, that infinite expanse of Truth within the narrow boundaries of a temple or a hill or a church, we experience the beginnings of Pure Awareness. Some devotees stop at the iconic level; others translate the icon into the Spirit. Sambandar clearly belongs to this latter category. There was no way he could ever have let the primordial knowledge of which he partook by the temple pond be obscured by any delusion that his chosen deity, Siva, was just a benevolent gift-giver consigned to the four walls of the inner *sanctum* of a temple. Siva was light; Siva was knowledge; Siva was life; Siva was none other than the Self in one and all. *Sarupya* is all right to begin with; but the goal is *sayujya*, total submergence and absorption of the entire psyche.

This goal has often been underscored by Sri Bhagavan:

> The great teachers have taught that the devotee is greater than the *yogi* and that the means to release is devotion, *which is of the nature of reflection on one's own Self.*[8]

[8] *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*: Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai (2001), p. 32.

> The *jiva* itself is Siva; Siva himself is the *jiva*. It is true that the *jiva* is no other than Siva. So long as one is bound by *karma* one remains *jiva;* when the bond of ignorance is broken, one shines as Siva, the Deity.[9]

To stress the point that the four approaches to *bhakti* traditionally referred to result in the final mystic union with the godhead, Sankara says:[10]

> I attain the similarity of form (*sarupya)* by performing Thy ritualistic worship; to closeness with Thee (*samipya)* by singing Thy praise; to residence in Thy heavenly plane (*salokya)* by associating and conversing with Thy noble devotees; and to oneness with Thee (*sayujya)* by contemplating on Thy form constituted of the whole of this living and non-living world. Thus in this very embodiment I shall attain life's fulfilment.

Siva, though He may be bounded by the confines of the devotee's heart where He resides, He is everywhere else simultaneously at the same time:[11]

> Siva the Lord of all, the tranquil and the gracious, the bestower of endless rewards, can be freely worshipped within the heart and outside. For He, my Lord, the King of Kings, dwells within my heart and *also transcends the worlds.*

Knowledge has always been a strand of *Saiva Siddhanta* and is the main strand of *Kashmiri Saivism*. In the final analysis, *bhakti* and *jnana* are the reverse and obverse of the same coin in the case of those who have arrived spiritually. The *bhakta* sees God as knowledge while the *jnani* approaches knowledge as God. The saint of Seerkazhi, the principal author of the *Thevaram,* has taught us this through his sinless and shining life.

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[9] *Self-Enquiry, op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.

[10] *Sivanandalahari, op. cit.*, 28.

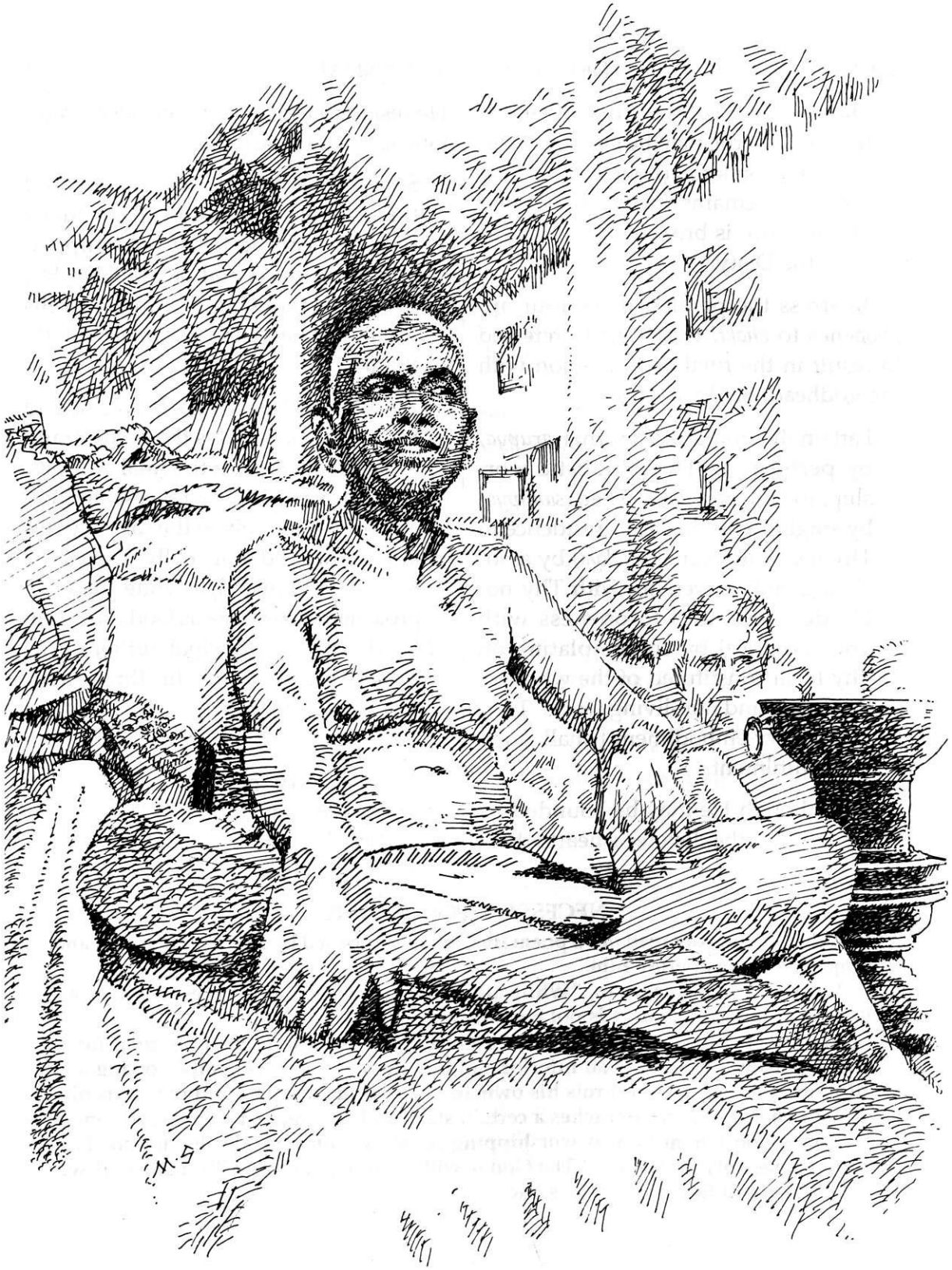
[11] *Ibid.*, 70.

NECESSITY FOR A GURU

Dilip Kumar Roy read out a poem in English composed by him on Bhagavan and sang some songs before him.

Later he asked Bhagavan, "While all say Guru's direction is necessary it seems Bhagavan has said a Guru is not necessary."

***Bhagavan*: I have not said so. But a Guru need not always be in human form. First a person thinks he is an inferior and that there is a superior, all-knowing and all-powerful God who controls his own and the world's destiny, and worships him or does *bhakti*. When he reaches a certain stage and becomes fit for enlightenment the same God whom he was worshipping comes as Guru and leads him on. That Guru comes only to tell him, "The God is within yourself. Dive within and realise." God, Guru and the Self are the same.**


M.S

The Ageless Comes of Age

By N. N. Rajan

IT is happy news that the birth centenary of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is to be celebrated in January, 1980.

To the ageless — we attribute an age;

The nameless — we hailed as Ramana;

The formless — we saw in human form.

He taught us to realise the ultimate Being behind form and name. It follows that Sri Ramana is not the physical frame only. An actor after playing his part resumes his natural self and normal behaviour. Sri Ramana after attaining Self-realisation remains in his natural state, one with the Self.

Though still encased in human form his individuality vanished in his seventeenth year, when he enacted the drama of death for himself and ceased to live a life of his own.

He left home as a perfect *jnani* for the redemption of humanity at large. It was not a casual or chance happening, but a divine movement accurately planned and well executed.

The only way to know the "Self" is to be the "Self". Sri Ramana has become the "Self". Such exalted souls, free from the fear of being reborn, become all-knowing and pass beyond grief and delusion.

An *Avatar* (incarnation) is just a manifestation of the "Self" (*Brahman*). But sages like Ramana having become one with the Self are verily the Self. Failing to understand the state of perfect abidance in the Self and the contentment of such a sage, common people see only the physical appearance unaware that the sage is unshakably established in Pure Consciousness.

Acharya Sankara says in his *Upadesa Sahasri*, "Liberation is neither union with *Brahman* nor separation from *Prakriti*. As union and separation are transitory, liberation is not the individual reaching *Brahman* or *Brahman* coming to him. The Self, the Reality Absolute — one's own nature — is never absent. It is uncaused. The Self itself is Liberation".

Reproduced from *The Mountain Path*, January 1979.

The universal dimension of Sri Maharshi's Grace not only encompassed people of all kinds and classes but also animals and birds. His compassion knows no limit. The same Self pulsates through every object in the world. This we felt in his presence.

Advaita Vedanta (Non-dualism) rests on three authorities — scripture, reasoning and experience. The personal experience of Sri Ramana as taught by him is the authority for modern man and it only confirms scriptures and reasoning.

He gave his guidance in such a way that no follower of his could ever lose the way in the search for the reality. His gospel will inspire thousands and the echoes from Arunachala will continue to be heard by generations to come all over the world.

Jivanmukti or Liberation in this body is the highest goal and in Bhagavan we had a clear understanding of this state.

Enquire "Who Am I?", "Be as you are" — this is the quintessence of his teachings. Truth will be reached only by the enquiring mind. Enquiry results in the reality of the seeker himself becoming the sought.

When ultimate truth is being revealed by Maharshi it comes with all the force of the great personality of the sage who sees nothing but the Self in all. He spoke in his own sweet and simple way and the seekers were easily convinced.

The message of Bhagavan may be put in a nutshell as follows: "All are longing for everlasting happiness, but they seek it in the wrong place, outside them. One's natural happiness within is always there. Tracing the way back to the source, one burning candle can light another candle — likewise an illumined person alone can illumine others.

Merely sitting in the presence of this sage who was ever established in *Sahaja Samadhi* (effortless continuous abidance in the Self) was a *sadhana par excellence*. We were breathing the invigorating and rejuvenating aroma of his Supreme Wisdom. His mere presence was capable of elevating one to spiritual heights. He has bequeathed to us the way to realise the glory of the Self.

For those who are endowed with humility, half the battle is won — "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted".

As witnessed by us, Sri Ramana was not the doer of any actions. Unattached to the body, he remained a silent spectator. He was like a lamp in the light of which various actions take place, without the light itself taking any part.

According to Adi Sankara, "The true Guru is one who knows the spirit of scriptures, he is sinless, unsmitten by desires and best among the knowers of Brahman; who has found his peace in Brahman, is calm like fire that has consumed its fuel, who is a boundless ocean of compassion and a friend of all who humbly approach him". All these marks of a *Sadguru*, we have seen in Sri Ramana.

Only a burning candle can light another candle — likewise an illumined person alone can illumine others.

As the *Vedic* scholars chanted sonorously the daily recitation and it swelled in rhythm, Sri Ramana used to sit in silence like a statue. At the end of this recitation there comes the reference to *Amrtatva* (state of Immortality). We directly witnessed this state in the gleaming eyes and divine form of the Sage.

Sri Maharshi used to join the chorus when hymns describing his own glory were sung during pre-dawn hours. It was a thrilling experience to see him sing his own praise without the least suggestion of a separate individuality. Who else but a perfect *jnani* could act with such detachment?

People stood dumbfounded at the severity of his last ailment accompanied by the blissful glow on his face. Luminous Pure Consciousness was at play, while the body suffered agony.

When primary stars appear on the firmament they are not alone, but surrounded by other stars. Likewise the Maharshi was surrounded by luminaries such as Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, Muruganar, Chadwick, the Osbornes, to name a few.

Paul Brunton says: "Again and again he gave us the teaching that the real Maharshi was not the body which people saw; it was the inner being. Those who never made the journey to India during his lifetime may take comfort in this thought; that it is possible to invoke his presence wherever they are and to feel its reality in the Heart".

This brings to our mind the assurance of Bhagavan, "Where can I go?" There is nowhere for him to go, as He is omnipresent.

He is ever present with us. Remembrance of him releases the inexhaustible fountain of his Grace.

Glory to the Lotus Feet of Sri Ramana!

PROTECTION OF THE GURU

In a play of dice called *Ashta Kashti* the pieces must pass through all the squares of the checkers before they reach the central square of rest and non-return. But so long as a pawn does not reach that square, it is liable to return again and again to its starting point and commence its weary journey many times over. If, however, two pawns happen to start their journey in unison and move jointly from square to square, they cannot be forced back by any winner.

Similarly in the world, those who start on their career of devotional practices, first uniting themselves with their *guru* and *Ishta* (chosen deity) need fear no reverses and difficulties and their progress will be smooth, unimpeded and without any retrogression.

— *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.*

Muthuswami Dikshitar: Saintly Composer of the South

By P. Sridharan

THE seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were remarkable periods in the history of culture and spirituality in South India where the *bhakti* movement flourished. The kings of South India were themselves religious and cultured. They encouraged artistes and gave due respect to saints and spiritual savants. The Cauvery river and its numerous tributaries that criss-cross the region made the lands fertile and generally it was a land of plenty and prosperity, thus providing a conducive and peaceful atmosphere in which people could pursue the highest devotional and spiritual ideals through the medium of the arts.

In such a milieu lived a pious scholar and musician, Ramaswami Dikshitar. He originally hailed from Virinchipuram in the North Arcot district. But due to disturbed political conditions in the mid-eighteenth century, Ramaswami Dikshitar's father migrated to the Cauvery delta with his family and settled at Govindapuram near Kumbhakonam. Ramaswami Dikshitar learnt music and musicology from many renowned musicians of those times and became a competent musician. He eventually settled down at Tiruvarur.

Known for its magnificent temple and huge tank and famous for its chariots, Tiruvarur is one of the *mukti kshetras*. The *purana* has declared that birth at Tiruvarur, *darshan* of Chidambaram, thinking of Arunachala and death at Kashi result in liberation. Great many were the saints born at Tiruvarur. Among these were Shyama Sastri, Saint Thyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshitar, revered as the Trinity of South Indian classical music.

Till his fortieth year Ramaswami Dikshitar did not have children. He and his wife went to Vaideeswaran Koil near Sirkali and worshipped Lord Vaidyanatha and Goddess Balambika and performed *Avarana pujas* for fortyeight days. On the last day, the Goddess appeared in his dream and presented him with a pearl necklace. The dream was interpreted by the elders of

the place to mean that his prayer was granted by the Goddess, and that a gem of a child would be born to him. In 1776, in the month of *Panguni*, when the star of *Krittika* was ascending, a male child was born to the couple. He was named Muthuswami after Lord Subramanya, who is known as Muthukumaraswami at Vaideeswaran Koil.

Under the guidance of his father young Muthuswami studied the *Vedas* and classical Sanskrit. He quickly acquired mastery over the *kavyas, alankaras* and *vyakarana*. Ramaswami Dikshitar himself gave intensive training in music, both in theory and practice, to his son. Muthuswami blossomed not only as a vocalist; he could play the *veena* too. Years later when he started composing, Muthuswami Dikshitar synthesised the *veena* and vocal styles of music to produce a distinct style which is noteworthy for its depth, high sense of aesthetics and sublimity.

While Muthuswami was still a boy, a patron of the arts from Manali near Madras, Muthukrishna Mudaliar, visited Tiruvarur, and had the opportunity of listening to the music of the Dikshitars. He was moved by it and invited the family to visit Manali to which Ramaswami Dikshitar agreed. The family shifted to Manali and settled down there and was patronised by the Mudaliar family. After Muthukrishna Mudaliar's death, his son Venkatakrishna Mudaliar continued to play host to the Dikshitars.

Muthuswami Dikshitar and his younger brothers had the opportunity of listening to Western bands playing at Fort St. George. At the suggestion of an Englishman, Dikshitar composed Sanskrit *sahityas* (words), in praise of Hindu deities corresponding to fifty of those Western tunes (including the British national anthem).

An event that took place at this stage changed Muthuswami Dikshitar's life completely. A *sannyasi*, Chidambaranatha Yogi, who was also a *Sri Vidya upasaka* and *Vedantin*, came to the Mudaliar household on his way to Kashi. He stayed for a few days with the Dikshitars. The young Muthuswami served the *Yogi* with humility and dedication. The *Yogi* now wanted to resume his tour and advised Ramaswami Dikshitar to send his son with him to Kashi. The father was not prepared to do so. However Venkatakrishna Mudaliar intervened in the matter and bid Ramaswami Dikshitar part with his son, saying that Muthuswami would be safe with the *Yogi* and that he would benefit immensely from association with the great man.

The period of six years that Muthuswami spent at Kashi was instrumental in moulding his personality and character. Under the benign grace of Chidambaranatha Yogi he lived a religious and spiritual life. The *Yogi* gave him *upadesa* of the *shodashakshari mantra* and initiated him in the *Sri Vidya* cult. He also taught the young lad *yoga* and

Vedanta. Muthuswami spent his time in Kashi serving his *guru*, reciting the *Vedas*, practising *Sri Vidya*, meditating, and singing and playing on the *veena*. Such a disciplined life resulted in Muthuswami's acquiring a keen and perceptive intellect tuned to spirituality.

One day, Chidambaranatha Yogi and Muthuswami went for a bath in the Ganga. The *Yogi* asked Muthuswami to descend a few steps and put his hands into the water. When Muthuswami did so, his hands closed upon a *veena*, with the word 'Rama' inscribed on it in Devanagari. Chidambaranatha Yogi said that this was Ganga Devi's *prasad* to the lad. The *Yogi* also blessed Muthuswami that he would become a great musician and composer and bid him return to his parents. Leaving Muthuswami on the banks, the *Yogi* plunged into the Ganga and left this world. The body was recovered from the river and buried in the Hanuman Ghat. Muthuswami was sorrow-stricken at the loss of his revered *guru*. Distraught, he left Kashi and started his journey back home.

Muthuswami's parents and brothers were overjoyed at his return. His knowledge of *Vedanta* and mastery of music earned their admiration. Muthuswami however, was not content with remaining at Manali. He remembered Chidambaranatha Yogi talk about the glory and grace of Lord Subramanya. Propelled by an inner urge he went to Tiruttani, one of the six abodes of the Lord. There he spent time in worship of the Lord and also practised deep meditation.

On the fortieth day of his stay at Tiruttani, while Dikshitar was repeating the *Shadakshari mantra*, an elderly person appeared before him and said, "Muthuswami, open your mouth". Dikshitar opened his eyes and saw before him the elderly person beaming with spiritual splendour. The old man asked Muthuswami to close his eyes and put sugar candy in his mouth. When Muthuswami opened his eyes, to his amazement, the old man had disappeared. Dikshitar understood that it was Lord Subramanya Himself who had come to bless him. His joy knew no bounds and he immediately burst into song. The first song that he composed on the occasion was *Sri Nathadi Guru Guho Jayati Jayati* in Mayamalavagowla *raga*. Then followed seven more songs, the underlying subject of these being the concept of the *Guru*. As a result of the vision of Lord Subramanya, Dikshitar took the Lord as his *Guru*. A study of these eight songs reveals that Dikshitar had attained high maturity in his knowledge both of *Vedanta* and of the art of music even at that young age. They also show that right from the beginning, his compositions were the outpouring of his own deep spiritual experiences.

From Tiruttani, Muthuswami Dikshitar went to Tirupati and Kalahasti, worshipped the deities there and sang in praise of them. From Kalahasti Dikshitar

returned to Manali and related his experiences at Tiruttani, and the songs which he had composed at the several shrines. The father averred that Muthuswami was the gift of the Mother God dess, that all this was Her grace and that the whole family was truly blessed. The brothers of Muthuswami Dikshitar learned all the songs and sang them.

Not long after this Muthuswami Dikshitar felt that he should visit the famous shrines of South India. His outlook had become wholly spiritual as a result of his life at Kasi and the vision of Lord Subramanya at Tiruttani. His parents had got him married while he was yet a boy. And, he had two wives. But his mind was not attracted by the things of the earth. He lived the life of a *grihastha-sannyasi*, living in the family, yet detached. Dikshitar decided to visit the innumerable temples of South India and sing the praise of the deities. This, he undertook as his mission in life.

Dikshitar and his family shifted from Manali and settled down at Kanchipuram. During this period Muthuswami Dikshitar composed a number of songs on Goddess Kamakshi, Ekamreshwara, Kailasanatha and Varadaraja. With a view to completing the study of *Vedanta*, he approached Upanishad Brahman, a saint of Kanchipuram, who besides teaching him the *Upanishads*, also inculcated in him a strong devotion to Sri Rama. This is clearly reflected in many of Dikshitar's songs on Sri Rama. Dikshitar lived in Kanchi for a period of about four years. He then started for Tiruvarur, his birth place, prompted by the thoughts of Lord Thyagaraja and Goddess Kamalambika. *En route*, he visited famous temples, worshipped the deities and composed on them. At Tiruvannamalai, one of the *Panchalinga kshetras*, where Lord Arunachaleswara manifests as *Agni* (fire), Dikshitar sang the Lord's praise in a song, *Arunachalanatham Smarami*. Dikshitar then visited Chidambaram, another *Panchalinga kshetra*, where the Lord manifests as *Akasa* (space) and where Lord Nataraja's cosmic dance has a mystic significance. Dikshitar has composed a number of songs on the Lord here. Adjacent to the Nataraja shrine there is a *Vaishnava* temple dedicated to Sri Govindaraja. Dikshitar has sung His praise in several songs.

Resuming his journey to Tiruvarur, Dikshitar visited Vaidiswaran Koil, Mayuram, and composed several songs in praise of the deities. The songs on Goddess Abhayamba at Mayuram are particularly remarkable for the exposition of *tantric* doctrines. In the piece *Ambikayah Abhayambikayah* there is an elaborate description of the various *chakras* in the human body and also the process by which *kundalini shakti* is kindled.

Muthuswami Dikshitar settled at his ancestral home at Tiruvarur. He spent most of his time at the temple of Lord Thyagaraja and Goddess Kamalambika, worshipping at the various shrines and singing *kritis* composed on them. At

Tiruvarur, his presence attracted musicians and scholars to his house. Also spiritually inclined souls found in Dikshitar a fountainhead of knowledge and a guide who could by his own *sadhana* and deep spiritual experience provide inspiration to them.

The group of songs, called the *Navavarna Kirtanas* composed in praise of Goddess Kamalambika, is the *magnum opus* of Muthuswami Dikshitar. The uniqueness of the lyrical content lies in the fact that they describe elaborately the *tantric* mode of worship of the Devi. In order to obtain the Goddess's grace, one must pass through nine circles, at each one of which *puja* has to be performed to her. Each *avarana* is a symbolic veil that obscures the vision of the ultimate truth and each *avarana* has to be propitiated to reach the *bindu* representing Brahman. Each has its own distinct name, and confers distinct benefits. The idea is that instead of totally negating the existence of the veils, the *sadhaka* should transcend them through a step-by-step approach to the Truth or Brahman enshrined at the ultimate step. This elaborate ritual is termed *Navavarna Puja*.

Dikshitar, in these compositions, says that the Goddess is enshrined in *Hrit Kamalanagara*, i.e., the heart-lotus, thereby alluding also to Tiruvarur, which is known as Kamalanagara, where Goddess Kamalambika has Her temple. Dikshitar describes Her as a beautiful parrot who ensconced in the cage of *Pranava* grants the enjoyment of *brahmananda*. The composer exhorts his own mind and ours too to meditate on Goddess Kamalamba and thereby be freed of bondage resulting out of illusion. He describes Her as the embodiment of the *Mahavakyas*. She creates the five elements; She is the essence of light and sound. It is Her grace that lends life and energy to primordial *maya* and *avidya* that are the cause of this phenomenal universe. Dikshitar praises Her *kundalini* power with its tenfold energies and the tenfold actions, all of which She enfolds within Herself. She dispels all sorrows and gives joy and ultimate deliverance. She is the Supreme Devi seated on Lord Siva's lap in the innermost circle, the central *bindu* inside the Sri Chakra. The *Navavarana* compositions are, in musical wealth and metaphysical ideas, among the best available in classical music and can be utilised for spiritual *sadhana*.

Dikshitar's only daughter was married and settled in Tiruchirapalli. He visited that place on many occasions and composed songs on the deities at Jambhukesvaram, Srirangam and the Matrubhuteswara temple on the Rock Fort. He then visited Tanjavur and composed songs on the deities there and at nearby places. Swamimalai, Mannargudi and Tiruvaiyaru were some of the *kshetras* he visited and composed songs on.

There are many stories of miracles concerning Dikshitar traditionally handed down through generations. At Kivalur near Tiruvarur, where there is a temple to Lord Shiva, Dikshitar com-

Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar

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posed a song on the deity, *Akshayalinga Vibho Swayambho* and went to the temple to offer it to the Lord. By the time he arrived there the *puja* was over and the doors of the *sanctum sanctorum* were being closed. In spite of Dikshitar's request to keep the doors open for sometime, the priest refused to oblige and prepared to depart. Dikshitar sat down and began to sing the song. When Dikshitar was approaching the end of the piece, it is said that the doors of the *sanctum sanctorum* opened of their own accord. The people gathered there were amazed, and the stunned priest fell at the feet of Dikshitar and craved his pardon. After having *darshan* of the deity to his heart's content Dikshitar returned to Tiruvarur.

Tambiappan, one of Dikshitar's disciples who played the *Shuddha Maddalam*, a percussion drum at the Thyagaraja temple, once had a sudden attack of stomach pains, which the doctors were unable to cure. Hearing this, Dikshitar, who was an expert in astrology, examined his horoscope and found that the planet Jupiter (Guru) was exerting an adverse influence at that time. He composed a song in praise of Jupiter, taught it to Tambiappan and bid him sing it regularly. Tambiappan was completely cured within a few days. Dikshitar then composed songs on all the planets, which he felt would benefit the whole of mankind. The *Navagraha* songs reveal Dikshitar's deep knowledge of astrology and allied sciences.

Amidst this, Dikshitar was worried over the welfare of his two brothers who had gone to Madurai a few years earlier. After sometime the news of his brother Chinnaswami's death reached him and he was greatly grieved. Dikshitar immediately set out for Madurai in order to meet his youngest brother Baluswami.

On reaching Madurai, Dikshitar visited all the famous temples there and sang on the deities. He then went in search of his youngest brother Baluswami. Being spiritually advanced and an *advaitin*, he put aside his grief and continued visiting temples and singing in praise of the gods. While nearing Sattur near Ramanathapuram, the people of the area on sighting Dikshitar and judging him to be a man of God, apprised him of their distress. The whole area was parched and the people and cattle were suffering due to lack of water. There were no rains for a long time. Moved by their plight, Dikshitar created a new *raga Amritavarshini* and composed the song *Anandamritakarshini* in praise of the Mother Goddess pleading with Her to pour rain as *amrita*, and sang it then and there. It is said that the sky darkened and in a few minutes the whole area received copious rains to the joy and relief of the people. Dikshitar travelled further south and visited Rameswaram, Tiruchendur and other pilgrim centres and sang of the deities there. One day he heard about a marriage that was to take place at Ettayapuram palace. Dikshitar came to know that the bridegroom was none other than his brother Baluswami. He joined the party that travelled to

Ettayapuram. Baluswami and the Raja of Ettayapuram were overjoyed to receive the great composer. Dikshitar stayed in Ettayapuram for a few months at the request of the Raja. Then the thought of Goddess Kamalambika haunted him and he returned to Tiruvarur.

Dikshitar now lost both his wives. Free from family responsibilities, he spent his time composing, teaching worthy disciples and in spiritual *sadhana*. Knowing intuitively that he had not much time left in this world, Dikshitar proceeded to Ettayapuram to spend his last days with his brother. The Raja considered it a rare privilege to play host to him.

It was a day before the *Dipavali* festival in the year 1835. The Ettayapuram palace elephant behaved in a strange manner. It went to the nearby crematorium and lay down there, not allowing anyone to come near it. This was seen as a bad omen for the state and the Raja rushed to Dikshitar for counsel and remedy. Dikshitar assured him, "Nothing will happen either to you or to your state. Do not worry". Relieved, the Raja returned to his duties. It was *Naraka Chaturdashi, Dipavali* day. Dikshitar rose early and after his bath performed elaborate *puja* after which he bade his disciples sing his compositions. He especially asked for his masterpiece, *Minakshi Memudam Dehi* which he had composed in praise of Goddess Minakshi of Madurai. When the lines *Meenalochani Pashamochani*, meaning, 'the one who cuts asunder the bonds of life' were being sung, Dikshitar's soul merged into the Eternal. He was sixty years old. The grief-stricken Raja lamented that no greater tragedy could have befallen him and his state than the loss of such a great soul.

His Work and Art

Muthuswami Dikshitar adopted the Nayanmars and Alwars as his model and visited shrines composing songs on the deities there. He visited both *Saivite* and *Vaishnavite* temples and sang of all gods. His patron-deity was Lord Subramanya; nevertheless, he exhibited true devotion towards all deities and sang in praise of all gods including Brahma, Anjaneya and on the river Ganga too. In all his compositions he emphasised that the deities were all manifestations of the one and only *Paramatma*. Thus the songs of Dikshitar present a happy blend of *bhakti* and *jnana*. His songs are a storehouse of information on temples — their deities, rituals, customs, festivals and legends.

Dikshitar did not compose in praise of man for the sake of lucre, unlike many other composers of those times. In this he was very much like his illustrious contemporaries, Thyagaraja and Shyama Sastri. Though he struggled to keep the wolf from his door, Dikshitar never sought royal patronage which he could have easily obtained. Neither did he seek help from his disciples. Such was his *vairagya*. One day, both the wives of Dikshitar were in a quandary as there were no provisions at home. Dikshitar was teaching his disci-

ples. One of them was a *devadasi*, Kamalam. The ladies called her inside and told her that there was no rice and that they had no option but to starve that day. Kamalam immediately offered to pledge her gold bangles and provide for buying provisions. On hearing of this, Dikshitar felt sad. In the *gurukula* system of the olden days, it was the *guru* who housed and fed the disciples besides teaching them. He told Kamalam that he could not bring himself to tax his disciples and that if he were a true devotee, the Lord would definitely take care of him. Refusing Kamalam's offer of help, Dikshitar left for the temple, composed and sang a song with great emotion before Lord Thyagaraja and returned home. It so happened that a high ranking official of the Tanjore king had planned to visit Tiruvarur on that date, and the local officer had collected provisions on a large scale for him. But that morning a communication was received from the officer that his trip had been cancelled. The local official decided to send the provisions gathered to Muthuswami Dikshitar who was overwhelmed at the grace of the Lord. When his second wife once pestered him for jewellery and advised him to seek the patronage of the king, a distressed Dikshitar composed a song in which he says that he will always pray to Goddess Lakshmi and will shun the patronage of lowly man (*Hiranmayim Lakshmim sada bhajami, hina manava ashrayam tyajami*). In another song, *Vinapustaka Dharini*, he says that taking refuge in Goddess Saraswati will save one from the ignominy of having to look up to mere man (*Nara Adama Anana Viloka Shokapaham*). Dikshitar's only aim in life was to sing the praise of the Lord and progress spiritually in order to attain Self-realisation.

The underlying theme of Muthuswami Dikshitar's compositions is *advaita*. He has brought out the highest and most profound truths of the *Upanishads*. His own spiritual experiences were profound and intense. He held a deep fascination for the esoteric and the metaphysical. His guru in *Sri Vidya*, Chidambaranatha Yogi belonged to the *kadi matha* which is the most *advaitic* of the Sri Vidya cult.

Dikshitar had taken Lord Subramanya as his *Guru* and in innumerable songs addresses Him as such, the chief ones being the eight songs starting with the words 'Guru Guha'. Dikshitar also praises Lord Subramanya as one who imparted the highest *upadesa* to His own Father, Lord Shiva. Guha is a name of Lord Subramanya. It also means 'cave'. The word also has an esoteric meaning. Dikshitar by addressing the Lord as Guru Guha actually means that the Lord is the *guru* in the cave of the heart. Comparing this with Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's *Hridaya Kuhara Madhye Kevalam Brahma Matram*,[1] we understand the true import of

[1] In the centre of the Heart-Cave there shines alone the one *Brahman* as the 'I, I', the *Atman*. Reach the Heart by diving deep in quest of the Self, or by controlling the mind with the breath, and stay established in the *Atman*.

Dikshitar's phrase. Dikshitar also adopted 'Guru Guha' as his *mudra* i.e., he adopted it as his signature with which to identify his songs.

In his first composition, *Sri Nathadi Guruguho*, Dikshitar explains the true functions of a *guru* and the duties of a spiritual *sadhaka*. He exhorts the aspirant to identify his *Sadguru* with the Supreme Being itself. Being well-versed in, and an avid practitioner of *tantra sastra*, Dikshitar explains the truth according to both *advaita* and *tantra* which have many similarities. According to *tantra* the *Parabrahman* is the Primordial Guru and is known as Sri Natha, Adi Natha and Adi Guru. *Tantra* too, like *Advaita*, asserts that the Primordial Guru takes the form of the human Guru. Dikshitar, in this song, describes the Guru as *Ajnana dvanta prachanda bhaskaro* (the sun who destroys the darkness of ignorance), *Jnana pradayako* (bestower of Knowledge), and *Manasa anandakara chaturataro* (adept in making the mind blissful). Dikshitar says that the Guru removes the differentiating notions in the devotee's mind (*Bhedadi vidarena*) and clears his doubts, like a physician curing a patient's disease (*Vikalpa roga vaidyena*). The guru blesses and protects his disciple who has surrendered to him and also elevates the disciple to his own level. Dikshitar, in this song, exhorts the *sadhaka* to deeply contemplate on the truth that he is Consciousness-Bliss — *Chidananda nathoham iti santatam hridini bhaja*. Dikshitar says that man's real nature is Consciousness-Bliss and that he should seek the blessings of the *guru* and realise his true state.

In his second composition, *Manasa Guruguha*, Dikshitar exhorts man to surrender at the feet of the guru and be truly devoted to him. Human birth was for the sole purpose of meditating on the *Paramatma* and ultimately realising one's identity with Him. Dikshitar advises the aspirant to always cling to the *guru's* feet, to always chant the *guru's* name, conquer passions and considering the *guru* as the only refuge, surrender unto him. In another song belonging to this group, *Sri Guru Guha Murte*, Dikshitar describes the guru as the remover of illusory differences that are perceived by the ego. The guru is content in his Self-realisation and is detached. He is the light which shines like the sun and the moonlight on the soul, thereby awakening it. He is the Supreme Lord, the Lord of Eternal Bliss. There is a song in this group in which Dikshitar says, "I am the *dasa* of Guru Guha, rather, I am myself Guru Guha" thus echoing the *Mahavakaya* "I am Brahman".

The song *Sadhu Jana Chitta* is in praise of the Supreme Brahman. Here Dikshitar says that the Supreme Self resides in the heart-lotus of virtuous people. The composer describes the Omnipresent, Supreme Being as that which takes the form of all creation and that which is without form too. Brahman is pure inner bliss which is without beginning and ever existent. It is the Primordial Being. It is untouched by the ills of this universe. Hailed

in form and without, hailed by the scriptures, the Self is the stimulator of this illusory picture of existence. It is meditated on by Vishnu and Siva themselves as also by Sukha, Vamadeva and other sages!

In the song *Anandeswarena*, which Dikshitar has written in praise of Lord Shiva, he outlines the ways of spiritual *sadhana* and describes the *jnani* who is of the very form of Maheswara Himself. Going beyond the three stages of existence, the gross, subtle and causal, and the three *avasthas*, the states of waking, dream and sleep, the Self remains a mere witness and ever pure. Through practice of *sravana* (hearing of the truth from the *guru*), *manana* (reflection on the truth) and *nididhyasana* (uninterrupted contemplation), the *sadhaka* experiences the bliss of *aparoksha* (the direct experience of the Self) and is established in *samadhi nishta* (steady abidance in the Self).

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has explained the above truth succinctly thus:

> The enquiry "Who am I?" is the *sravana*. The ascertainment of the true import of 'I' is the *manana*. The practical application on each occasion is *nididhyasana*. Being as 'I' is *samadhi*.[2]

Muthuswami Dikshitar, through his exemplary life, his exquisite art and his profound ideas has left behind a rich religious and spiritual legacy for mankind.

Countless have benefited and are still benefiting from singing or listening to his immortal compositions. They possess an ethereal quality capable of lifting one from mere mundane existence to the heights of art and spirituality.

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[2] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 647.

PRAYER FOR PARDON

I have not made rich gifts to the *brahmins*, cherishing in my heart,
O Mahadeva! Thy hallowed form;
I have not made, in the sacred fire a million oblations of butter,
Repeating the holy *mantra* given me by the *guru*;
Never have I done penance along the Ganga with *japa* and study of the *Vedas*.
Therefore, O Siva! O Mahadeva! O Sambho! Forgive me, I pray for my transgressions.
I have not sat in the lotus posture, nor have I controlled
The *prana* along the *sushumna*, repeating the syllable Om
In the ever-shining Witness Consciousness, whose nature is that of the highest *Brahman*;
Nor have I in *samadhi*, meditated on Sankara, dwelling in every form as the Inner Guide.
Therefore O Siva! O Mahadeva! O Sambho! Forgive me, I pray, for my transgressions.

— Shankaracharya, *Siva Aparadha Kshamapana Stotra*.

The Martyrdom of the Girl Saint Maria Goretti

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

SAINT Maria Goretti, the girl saint, is still remembered and admired in religious circles. Short was the duration of her life, but great was her moral and spiritual stature. The sheer purity of her life is the principal virtue for which she is revered. Her personality stands out well like a beacon in the modern world.

Our society is characterised by an inordinate interest in the pursuit of pleasure. Of what value are all the latest advances in science and technology when there has been no corresponding increase in our moral standards? Sexual promiscuity is fast becoming the accepted norm everywhere with the result that those who advocate sexual abstinence are frequently branded as old-fashioned killjoys. In this degenerate age of *Kali*, how many realise that the *divine* purpose of sex is procreation, not recreation? If this truth were fully understood, it must surely follow that those not wishing to beget children must totally eschew sex. A chaste life is not necessarily an unhappy or unfulfilled one. While leading a pure and unblemished life, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi ascended the very summit of spirituality. This fact is particularly noteworthy. Let us not forget that the *rishis* of bygone ages upheld the noble ideal of *brahmacharya* which they deemed indispensable to spiritual progress. We would be well advised to turn to them for inspiration and practical guidance.

A devotee posed the question, "Celibacy is a *sine qua non* for *yoga*?" On that occasion Ramana Maharshi remarked, "So it is. Celibacy is certainly an aid to realisation among so many other aids... A real *brahmachari*, that is one who lives in Brahman, finds bliss in the Brahman which is the same as the Self. Why then should you look for other sources of happiness? In fact the emergence from the Self has been the cause of all the misery."[1]

Maria Goretti (1890-1902), the first daughter of her mother Assunta and her father Luigi, was born at Corinaldo in Italy. It was a large family of seven children. Their lives were full of financial

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The quotations in the article are drawn from i) *Maria Goretti, Teenage Martyr* by Glynn Mac Niven-Johnston, Catholic Truth Society London, 1997, ii) *The Little Way Association* (Issue No.46), and iii) St. Maria Goretti in Garments All Red: Godfrey Poage: Tan Books (1998).

[1] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.12, (1978 Edn.).

hardship and suffering. The burdensome responsibilities of Assunta and Luigi became easier to bear because they loved each other and there was mutual support. They were model parents. Their children admired and emulated them. Although Assunta had received little education she strove to bring up her children as good practising Christians. In many respects this couple was ordinary but their deep religious faith was extraordinary with the result that their *bhakti* had an immediate impact on Maria. They could not afford to send their children to school but they were taught to pray. They appreciated nature and saw the presence of God in His creation. Assunta obviously held Maria in high esteem because she once testified that her daughter never wilfully caused her the least displeasure.

That little Maria was quite a personality is evident from the following description of her by Theresa Cimarelli, a contemporary of Maria: "I used to see her every day as she passed by the door to get water from the well. But she never stopped. She was a serious girl. She came and went quickly and busily, and there was no reproach when we nicknamed her 'the little old lady'. Maria was always modest and reserved. We all liked her, we admired her. She was more religious than the rest of us. I was just a girl then, and would that I had followed her example! But at that age most of us are senseless. We scarcely know what we are doing. We seek pleasure and popularity. We permit ourselves to be distracted from better things."

Small though the children were at that time, they worked hard and tried to help their father Luigi to farm a small piece of land near Corinaldo. Such work enabled them to feed and clothe themselves and eke out a miserable existence. Unfortunately the farm was not large enough to support the family and they decided to leave it. Afterwards Luigi worked temporarily in a farm near Rome. It was there that the Goretti family met the Serenelli family members — Serenelli, a widower, and his two teenage sons, one of whom was Alessandro. The families decided to go into partnership. At first the two families seemed to complement each other well but, in retrospect, it is clear that they were all very unwise.

The families decided to share an old house near the coastal town of Nettuno. While living together, the kitchen and stairs were in common use. The farm animals were on the ground floor. Assunta had to cook, clean the house and do the mending. A coarse and belligerent man, Serenelli was given to drinking. It turned out to be a disharmonious arrangement. Consequently the unhappy Gorettis were making plans to return home when Luigi died of malaria. It was a difficult period. Assunta worked hard on the land and little Maria looked after her brothers and sisters.

Although Maria performed her household tasks well, she felt the need to unfold in the sunshine of spirituality.

"Mother," said Maria, "when will I make my First Communion? I can no longer live without Jesus."

"My child," replied the mother sadly, "how can you do it? You can't read ... and I have nothing to pay for your dress and slippers."

Soon she was attending catechism lessons along with other children. For eleven months the girl prepared for her First Communion. On that great day in her life, she believed, Jesus would come to her as the Bread of Life. Toys and beautiful clothes did not interest Maria who was in the process of preparing her soul for Jesus. A priest who examined her suitability to receive the eucharist (the holy bread and wine) was highly impressed by Maria's answers to questions. Before receiving her First Communion, Maria was properly dressed like a bride in a veil and a crown of flowers. Was she not going to meet Jesus, the Prince from Heaven? During the sermon Father Jerome exhorted the children "to preserve their souls pure and innocent, and *to die rather than commit a mortal sin.*" These powerful words had a profound impact on Maria's impressionable mind. After holy mass the other participating children rushed to thank the priest, but Maria remained behind, communing deeply with the Divine.

It was the happiest day of her life. But the memory of her deceased father cast a cloud over this special occasion. She recalled the hardships he had suffered and the sacrifices he had made for the family. Every day before going to bed she would recite the entire rosary for his soul's repose. It was also her practice to say the *Hail Mary* for him whenever Maria passed the cemetery where he was buried. "You have received Jesus today," advised Assunta on the day of her First Communion, "you must try ever so hard now to be good and pleasing to him."

Serenelli, the new master of the house (following the demise of Luigi), was so harsh that he refused to accept Assunta for work in the fields unless Maria replaced her mother as housekeeper; much of Maria's time had to be spent in the kitchen. In a way, Maria exemplified the virtue of obedience to the will of God for she was already content with her lot.

Maria, the illiterate country lass, who had learned her prayers by heart from Assunta, started teaching them in turn to her siblings.

Alessandro, the son of Serenelli, is the villain of this story. There was an aching emptiness within Alessandro after he had lost his mother in childhood. His negligent relatives had brought him up badly and the lonely boy went astray. He enjoyed reading lurid magazines. Often he locked himself in his room and brooded.

As Assunta was too tired to work, she asked Maria to take her place in the fields. "It was a pleasure for the girl to help, and she had set out with Alessandro to hoe at the other end of the property. They were alone in the field now, working side by

side for more than an hour. Suddenly Alessandro, throwing aside his hoe, crossed the furrow that separated them and stood before her. He seemed beside himself. His eyes were alight with a strange fire. He seized Maria by the arms, stammering words that she could not grasp. She was stupefied, unable to understand what he wanted. Then it suddenly dawned on her that he was soliciting her to sin. Violently she shook herself free and fled down the fields. She hid herself in a hedge till noon, and then went in for lunch. In the afternoon she pretended to return to work with him, but under the pretext of getting a basket in the barn, had climbed to the loft and buried herself in the hay, where she remained motionless for three hours."

For an entire week Maria had prudently avoided Alessandro. However one morning when there was no one else in the house, Maria was taken by surprise as she was making the beds. "He had entered from behind and taken hold of her. She had sunk her nails into his face until he cursed in pain and let her go. Immediately she had started for the door to call for help, but he was there before her and silenced her with a threat, "If you say a word to your mother, I'll kill you!" Angrily he shook his fist before her scared face. Believing that the best course of action was to keep the secret to herself, poor Maria lived in a state of fear. There would be more conflict with Serenelli, she thought, if she were to complain about his son's terrible behaviour. But he continued to pester her.

Despite Maria's great fear "a voice in prayer reassures her and tells her she is strong. Who shall be able to overcome God living in her heart?"

Once Alessandro dragged Maria into the house and bolted the door. "With waves of fear, Maria understands his evil intentions ... a supernatural energy animates her. She will resist sin to the end — even to death if need be. Frantically Maria wrenches free and screams for help ... but who can hear amid the noise ... She leaps around the table for protection, but he knocks it aside and trips her. As she falls, he pins her, yet she continues to struggle wildly for release ... 'No! I will not, Alessandro, no!' Her constancy seems only to enrage him. He draws the cruel knife menacingly over her ... The knife now hangs over her breast. She must choose — death or life, Heaven or Hell, God or Satan, sin or martyrdom. In a burst of heroism, making desperate efforts to free herself, she chooses energetically, superhumanly. 'No! No! It is a sin! God does not want this! If you do this, you will go to Hell! What are you doing, Alessandro! You will go to Hell!' The tragedy followed ... With mad rage, he plunged the steel into her chest and abdomen, then into her back making fourteen wounds in all."

Bloodstained Maria was taken to the hospital in a horse-drawn ambulance. Her intestines were torn, the lungs were totally pierced and the heart grazed. Agonised, Maria invoked the Blessed Virgin.

Maria crossed her hands on her breast. "Her soul was ready, but there remained one more heroic act before her final tryst with God. The chaplain reminded her of how Jesus had pardoned his murderers when he died upon the cross. She seemed to reflect. Her eyes rested upon the crucifix on the wall ... she said: 'Yes, for the love of Jesus I too pardon him, and I want him to be with me in Heaven' ... Her head settled calmly on the pillow. The light in her beautiful eyes went out. Maria had breathed her last."

Every crisis in life is a test of our spiritual state. Such a test will reveal the existence or otherwise of goodness, virtue, morality and compassion. There is a secretive side to our nature that suddenly surfaces during crises. We are, for instance, tested when we become the victims of physical or psychological violence. Many would react angrily or violently if they came under attack. But in such situations saints remain completely unperturbed, never reacting violently to violence. On account of their inner purity saints pass these tests with flying colours.

Maria's act of pardoning her murderer shows that she was not the one to bear any grudge. That noble gesture of friendly forgiveness testifies to a certain purity of heart.

When Jesus was a comparatively young man in his early thirties his extraordinary life suddenly ended in a very painful way. Yet he bore his sufferings in a sacrificial spirit. While he was humiliatingly tortured on the cross, did Jesus ever get angry or curse his tormentors? It was not in his compassionate nature to harbour retaliatory resentments even when he was being killed. On that occasion he uttered those memorable words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[2]

Maria, true to her Christian principles, was echoing these very same words of Jesus when on her deathbed she lovingly forgave Alessandro, the merciless killer.

Never did Maria declare that Alessandro deserved to be punished in prison or burned in Hell. On the contrary, she expressed a desire to meet her assassin in Heaven. Strangely enough, one could sense Maria's lurking affection for the criminal. Another puzzling question is her reference to Heaven. Maria takes it for granted that she is going to be reborn in Heaven. Did she have a premonition of her afterlife? Given the very religious and virtuous life that she had led, Maria probably believed that Paradise was hers for the asking.

It is really remarkable that a child of twelve had so much faith in God and willingly sacrificed her precious life for the sake of honour and righteousness. Very unusual was Maria's commitment to the well being of her soul.

At his trial Alessandro behaved arrogantly and refused to accept responsibility for his crime. But the evidence clearly

[2] Luke. 23: 34.

established that he was guilty of murder. He pleaded insanity but the doctors who examined him declared otherwise. As he was still a minor, he was leniently sentenced to thirty years of hard labour.

Remorseless at first, he seemed happy in prison. Once when a priest came to see the prisoner, Alessandro lost his temper and shouted at the clergyman, "It was all your fault that I lost her! You and your teachings!" He made a nasty scene. He was painfully aware that Maria's moral excellence had prevented him from seducing her. Understandably, he was very displeased with the teachings that set great store on purity. Jesus had taught that even thinking a sinful thought tantamounts to doing a sinful deed: "You have learned that it was said 'Do not commit adultery, but I tell you that a person who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart".[3]

Nearly six hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Gautama Buddha had already explained in the very first stanza of *The Dhammapada* that our lives are conditioned by the contents of our minds. The character of our lives is determined by what we think. Hence when a person speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering will follow him in the same way that a cart's wheels follow the oxen that draw it. In accordance with the *karmic* law, Alessandro had to reap the outcome of the poisonous seeds that he had sown. He suffered from sleeplessness; he became nervous and troubled.

Alessandro had a strange experience in jail that changed the course of his life. When he was all alone in his cell one night Maria suddenly appeared to him. Terribly scared, he screamed and the guards arrived. "I saw her! I saw her!" he exclaimed, "I saw Maria dressed in dazzling white, gathering beautiful lilies in a garden and handing them to me. As I took them from her outstretched hands, they were transformed into small lights that glowed like candles." Maria's appearance, he later stated, convinced him once and for all that she had forgiven him. It was a turning point in his life. He became a new man.

Alessandro quite openly confessed his guilt: "I am deeply sorry for what has happened. I have taken the life of an innocent girl whose one aim was to save her purity, shedding her blood rather than give in to my sinful desires. I publicly retract the evil I have done and beg pardon of God and of the stricken family. One hope encourages me — that I also may one day obtain God's pardon, as so many others have."

If a wrongdoer truthfully and sincerely admits and confesses that he has committed misdeeds, and if he also deeply regrets those wrongs and wishes to make amends, he would thereby have taken the first step in the right direction. By means of confession it is certainly possible to unburden oneself of worries that plague the mind, heart or conscience. However, the self-purifying effectiveness of confession

[3] Matthew: 5: 27-29.

depends entirely on whether or not it is full, frank and self-revealing; it does not in any way depend on the ecclesiastical status of the person who hears the confession. So long as confession is honest and heartfelt, it really makes no difference whether one openly acknowledges one's sins to an ordained priest or even to a stone pillar. Catholics believe that because the clergy represent God, the priests are qualified to hear confessions. Priests are only human beings and fallible ones at that. Can any priest, unless he is God-realised, ever represent the Divine? Besides, if God is omniscient, surely the Lord who perceives all things must already be well aware of all our sins. What is the point of troubling God by pouring out our long list of sins to Him?

What is the *raison d'etre* of confession? Many devotees have the psychological need to go to a priest to make their confessions. When kneeling near the confessional they somehow feel that they are in a sacred Presence. That emotion helps them to open up; it deters them from telling lies. Be that as it may, it seems to me that the purgation of the mind is a process that best takes place during the course of solitary meditation and self-inquiry.

Alessandro became a model prisoner and on account of his good behaviour he was released four years before the expiry of his prison term. He met Assunta and begged her pardon for the murder.

Assunta, in the manner of Maria, was also a genuine Christian in the sense that she harboured no hatred even towards the one who murdered her beloved daughter. She pardoned him.

Alessandro testified at length when the question of Maria's beatification was under consideration. Beatification, incidentally, refers to the long and thorough investigation into the sanctity of a deceased individual which, if established, results in the granting of permission for the public veneration of that person. Beatification, the prelude to canonization, is usually, but not necessarily, followed by canonization. Only the Pope is entitled to make declarations relating to beatification and canonization. Once again Alessandro blamed himself for the killing, stating that he had broken God's law. He confessed that he had taken Maria's life because she had refused him, for the girl had neither responded to his advances nor approved of his amorous conduct by any suggestive word or smile.

Profoundly moved after learning about the circumstances of her death, people throughout Italy started regarding Maria as a saint-cum-martyr. Devotees went on pilgrimages to her tomb. Those who prayed to her and asked for cures found that their prayers were answered. Through the miraculous intercession of Maria the requests of the faithful were granted. A mother brought her tubercular son to Maria's grave and prayed. This boy from Nettuno had been looking wasted but he left the cemetery cured. Later he became a strong and healthy

young man. Similarly, as a consequence of seeking Maria's help, a Roman was also instantly cured. He had been suffering from an internal abscess. A Sicilian priest with a serious kidney ailment was cured after praying to Maria. There were numerous instances of extraordinary cures of a medically inexplicable kind. Before long Maria was given a prominent place in the pantheon of Christian saints.

Pope Pius XII proclaimed that Maria Goretti was a saint and canonised her on June 24th, 1950.

Racked with remorse, the penitent Alessandro decided to turn over a new leaf. He became very religious and rather reclusive. So he went to work as a gardener in an isolated Capuchin Monastery where he tended flowers. His favourite flowers were lilies, the symbols of purity. There he was a tertiary (lay member of the Order). He became a devotee of Saint Maria Goretti. As Alessandro was dying in his eighties, he declared that he was going to be with Maria. Presumably he believed, rightly or wrongly, that he deserved to live in Heaven with Maria since he had become a better human being and a spiritual one at that.

Conclusion

Maria's refusal to give in to sin illustrates the triumph of good over evil.

The death penalty deprives the wrong doer of the opportunity for self-examination and self-understanding. Since Alessandro was not sent to the gallows for his crime, he was given the chance to improve himself. So far as we know, he did not become a God-realised sage, but there was a positive change in his character.

The message of the story is very clear. None need fear of being condemned to eternal damnation. Even the hardened murderer who has fallen into the depths of degradation can turn a new leaf through proper repentance and advance spiritually, in this very life.

SAMADHI AND WORK

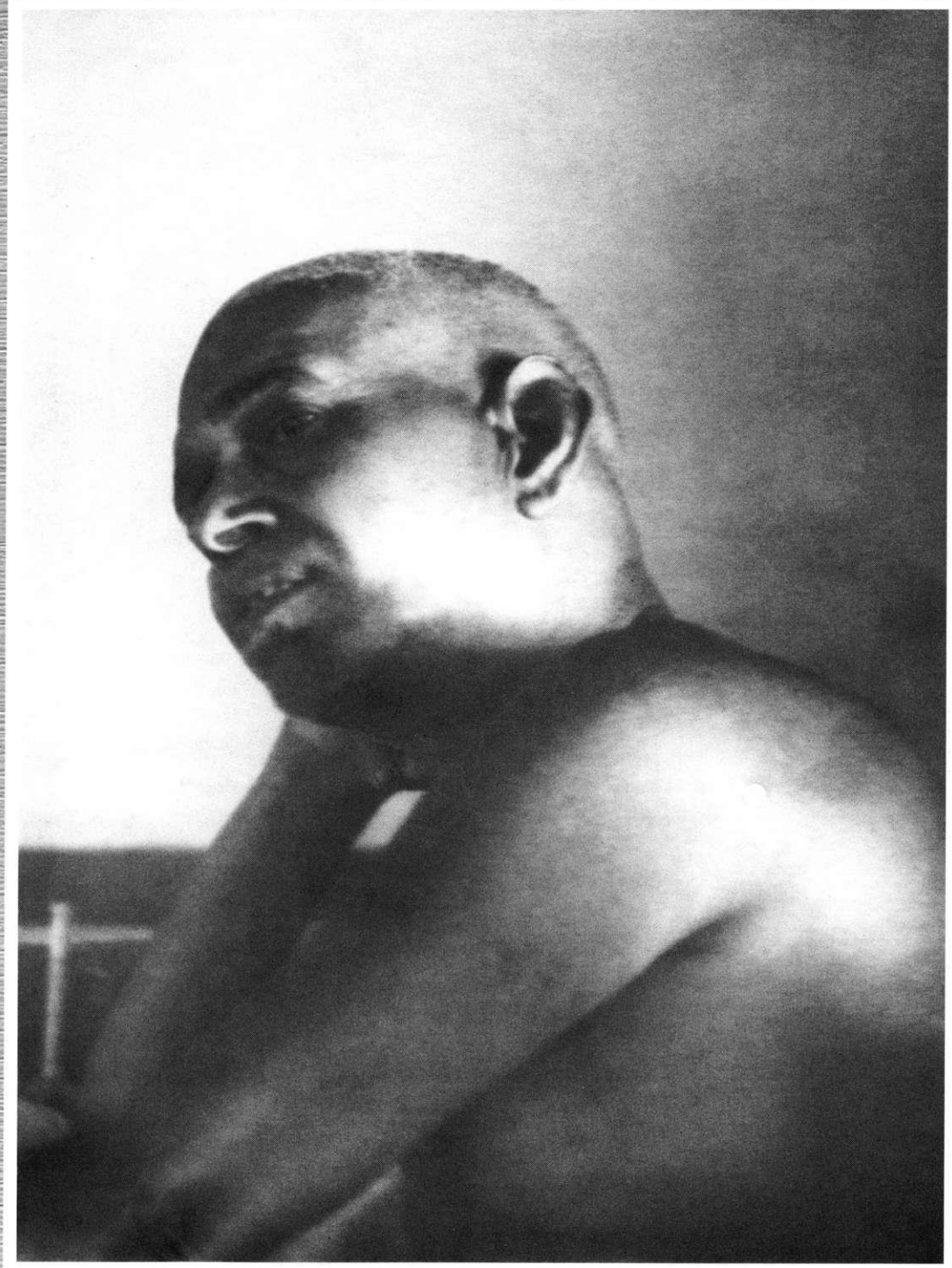
Devotee: Is it possible to enjoy *samadhi* while busy with worldly work?

Bhagavan: It is the feeling 'I work' that is the hindrance. Ask yourself, 'Who works?' Remember who you are. Then the work will not bind you. It will go on automatically. Make no effort either to work or to renounce; your effort is the bondage. What is destined to happen will happen. If you are destined to work, you will not be able to avoid it; you will be forced to engage in it. So leave it to the Higher Power. It is not really your choice whether you renounce or retain.

When women carrying jars of water on their heads stop to talk, they are very careful, keeping their mind on the water jars. Similarly, when a sage engages in activity, his mind remains fixed in the Self and his activity does not distract him.

— *The Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words.*

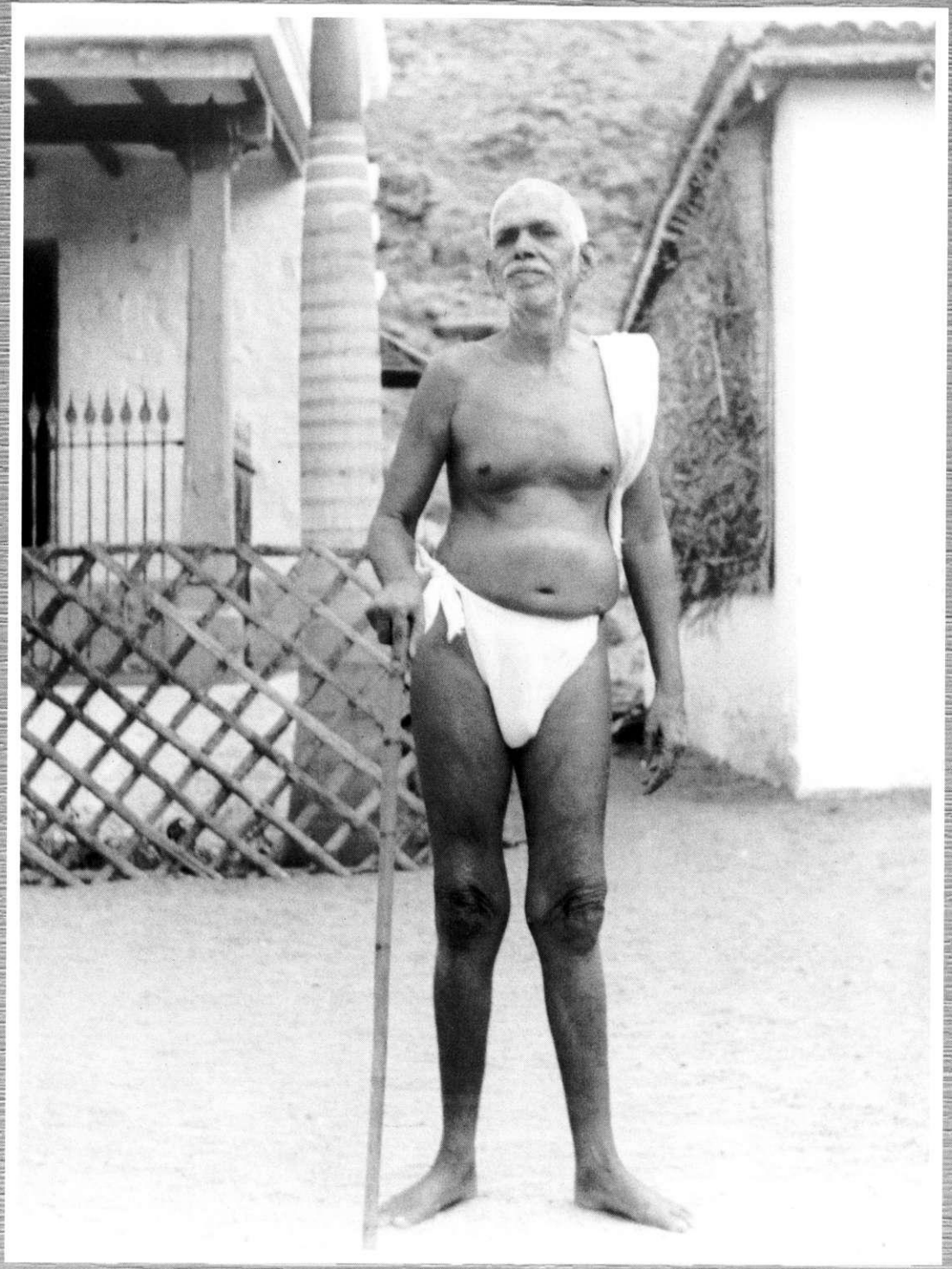
From our Archives



We are presenting here some rare photographs of Sri Bhagavan, as we did in the last issue.

Old Hall: Bhagavan taking a drink from a metal tumbler

Bhagavan reading a copy of *Tamizhan*



Bhagavan standing in front of *Vedapatasala*

A Strange Prayer

By I.S. Madugula

Lord,
I know not what I want,
much less what I need.
Yet something says within
that I must pray.

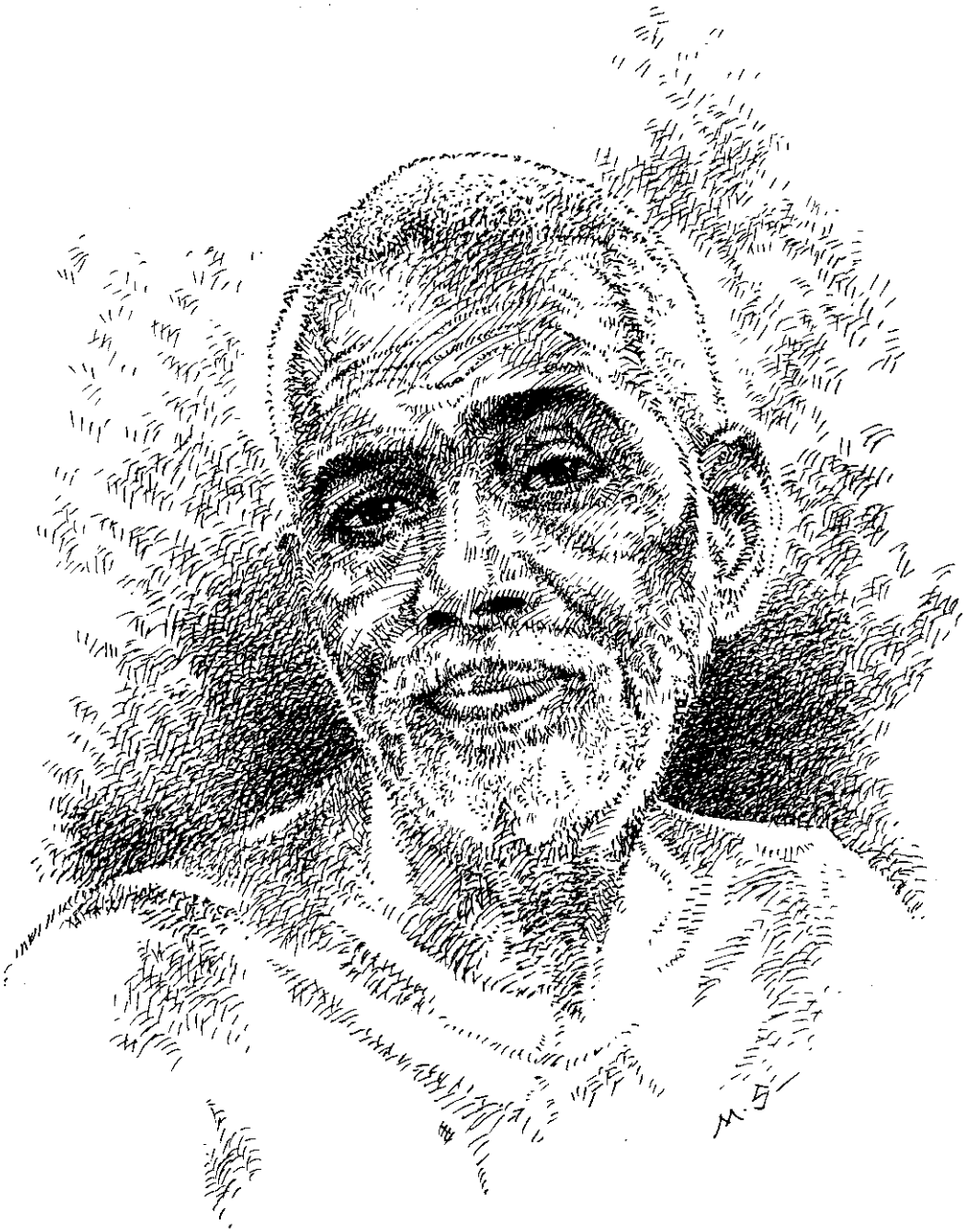
Is it true that you test
those that trust in you?
Why me, though? I flunked
the test well before I took it.

If I bungled my life
through worldly imprudence,
was it my impudence?
If I botched my chances,
was it my fate, or my fault?

True, I let my senses
get the better of my senseó
but am I not frail,
by definition?

I hold you liable
for all I have done and not done,
for, did you not strictly ordain
that I be and do thus and thus?

All I can do now,
then, is prayó
until I figure
who is praying,
to whom, and why.



The Spiritual Influence of Sri Ramana Maharshi in Czechoslovakia

Jiri Vacek (Prague, Czech Republic)

The author, a spiritual leader of Czechoslovakia, has been a devotee of Sri Bhagavan for long years. He explains here how the Czechs have a positive attitude to the spiritual message of India, particularly the teaching of Sri Maharshi.

The information that a good number of Czechs have taken to Self-enquiry seriously, is heartening.

THE Czech nation had always longed for a real spiritual life. It was given to the Hussite movement to give a fillip to the natural spiritual urge of the people. Master Jan Hus, the movement's spiritual leader, was probably the first in Europe to defend his right to freedom of opinion. In the eyes of the medieval church's hierarchy, this was a capital crime. The church's opinion was the only right opinion. Therefore they wanted an uncritical acceptance of their doctrine. Master Jan Hus did not want to respect blindly the church's authority and wanted to be convinced of its dogmas. He did not declare himself a follower of the church. As a result, he was charged with heresy and burnt alive at the stakes in 1415.

Jan Hus loved truth. He taught, "Seek truth, love truth, allow everybody his or her truth and defend truth until your death," and he died faithful to his conviction. His followers, the Hussites, stood up for their freedom of belief against the whole of Europe. Thanks to them, the Czech lands enjoyed a relatively great religious freedom until about 1621.

This freedom facilitated the emergence of the 'Bohemian brethren', another notable religious community. The basis of the Bohemian brethren's teaching was the return to the original purity of gospel-like Christianity and the relinquishment of all violence (Indian *ahimsa*). The great Russian philosopher and writer Tolstoy drew on the ideas of one of the Bohemian brethren's founders, Petr Cheleicky.

The last bishop of the Bohemian brethren was Jan Amos Komensky, a mystic and a founder of modern pedagogy. After the Catholics fully regained power in the Czech lands Jan Amos Komensky as well as thousands of open-minded Christians left their country. They preferred exile to a life of conscription under religious rulers.

The Czech nation lived under the Catholic oppression until 1918. Not even the drastic recatholization, however, did quench the Czechs' desire to know God and Truth directly, without the church's intermediaries.

At the beginning of the 20th century, information about Indian spirituality reached the Czech lands, mainly owing to the Theosophical Society. They raised considerable interest and attention. The Czech Theosophical Society was also established. Many Czechs found in Indian teachings what they had been looking for — the direct way to God.

As far as we know, the first European to report about Ramana Maharshi was an Englishman, Frank Humphreys. Humphreys' presentation of Maharshi's teaching was published in English in *The International Psychic Gazette*, London, shortly after 1911. Whether Humphreys' book ever made it to the Czech lands, we don't know, but we cannot exclude it. In 1921, the publishing house *Verlag Magische Blätter, Leipzig*, published a summary of Humphreys' book in German, along with a photo of middle aged Maharshi. As I have found out, this book (which, by the way, I possess) found its way to the Czech lands. I personally knew one of its owners, Prof. Dr. J. Wunsch (1910-1990). Since Prof. Dr. J. Wunsch was a member of the Czech Theosophical Society, one can assume that the other members of this society knew and possibly had Humphreys' book as well. Maharshi's message thus reached the Czech lands in the early years of the twentieth century.

After the foundation of Czechoslovakia, the Czechs' interest in *yoga* and mysticism surged up. Credit for much of this upsurge goes to K. Weinfurter, a translator, writer and publisher, who propagated both *yoga* and Christian mysticism. K. Weinfurter learnt of Ramana Maharshi from Paul Brunton, soon after the latter's visit to Ramanashram. Having recognized Maharshi as the greatest sage, he started to publish articles about Maharshi in his monthly journal *Psyche*. As far as I know, the first article about Maharshi in *Psyche* appeared in 1936. Many other articles followed.

In 1937, K. Weinfurter published the Czech translation of Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India*. The Czech translation thus closely followed the English original published in London, 1934. In 1940, the first two Czech books devoted to Ramana Maharshi and his work saw the light of the day. The first was J. Hoznourek's booklet *Sri Maharshi: His Life and Teachings* (47 pages); the second was

K. Weinfurter's *Writings of Sri Ramana Maharshi,* a voluminous selection of Maharshi's teachings (213 pages). The latter book can be considered the collected works of Sri Maharshi.

It is worth noting that the first English edition of *Spiritual Instruction* was published in Ramanashram in 1939. Since K. Weinfurter's *Writings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* included *Spiritual Instruction,* the Czech edition followed the English one with a lapse of one year. Similarly, the first English edition of *Sad Vidya* (*Forty verses*), published in Ramanashram in 1936, was followed by the Czech editions with a lapse of four years. The Czech edition of *Spiritual Instruction* and *Sad Vidya* might well have been the first editions ever published outside of India. This demonstrates how great was the Czechs' desire for pure truth and how far-reaching was Maharshi's grace.

J. Hoznourek's *Sri Maharshi: His Life and Teachings* and K. Weinfurter's *Writings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* were sent to Ramanashram in 1946. The book's delivery to Ramanashram is mentioned in *Day by Day* under the date 9-4-46. The Ashramites had a hard time recognizing the books' language until Arthur Osborne found out that the books came from Czechoslovakia.

(*Day by Day,* entry 31st October 1945 afternoon, mentions that Maharshi read the English translation of the French letter by Mr. Zikovsky from Czechoslovakia. He inferred that Mr. Zikovsky was one of those devotees who learnt about him from F. Humphreys, even before Paul Brunton published *A Search in Secret India.*)

After parting with Paul Brunton, K. Weinfurter kept corresponding with Ramanashram, himself. He wasn't the only Czech to do so at the time. Another great admirer of Maharshi was, for instance, P. Klima (known under the writer's pseudonym P.A. Tousek). P. Klíma was in touch with Ramanashram since about 1935. The article in *The Mountain Path,* 1980, (p. 28), describes how Maharshi appeared in P. Klíma's dreams and gave him instructions on *sadhana.*

Psyche, 15th September 1947, pp. 191-92, contains a description of what was probably the first Czech's visit to Ramanashram. The full name of the devotee is not given; he is referred to as Mr. M. The devotee—who was in fact Mr. Mazae, a diplomatic officer—visited Ramanashram by the end of the World War II, probably in 1945, and spent there three weeks. (While I was writing these lines, friends of mine brought me a few original photographs of Mr. Mazae in Maharshi's company. An interesting coincidence, isn't it?) The following is an excerpt from the *Psyche*'s article:

> Our long-time friend returning from India through China sent us an interesting letter from which we publish a few sentences. "As you may think, I took the advantage of my involuntary stay

in India to visit Ramana Maharshi in south India. I spent in his ashram three weeks, finding there rest not only physical but also—and mainly—mental. My visit was filled with so many beautiful moments that I had hard time leaving him, preferring the ashram's divine atmosphere for the mundane life. Sitting at his feet is for one's soul what balsam is for a hurting wound. How wonderful it would have been if only more Czech mystics devoted to Bhagavan Maharshi were given the opportunity to spend some time in his presence!

A Slovak worshipper of Ramana Maharshi, well known for his articles in *The Mountain Path*, was Dr. Robert Fuchsberger from Bratislava. In the article "How I came to Maharshi" (see *The Mountain Path* 1966, p. 280) he describes his vision of Ramana Maharshi.

As is clear from the memories of Jaroslav Koei from Ostrava (see *The Mountain Path* 1977, p. 213), people in Prague knew and practised the method of Self-enquiry already in 1936, i.e., before this method was first mentioned in the Czech press.

Jaroslav Koei said on several occasions that he was in mental contact with Ramana Maharshi. Many Czech followers of Maharshi, both in the past and today, acknowledged the same. They too definitely received guidance from the master.

I personally heard of Ramana Maharshi for the first time in 1946 when I was fifteen through Petr Klíma. I immediately recognized that Maharshi was a unique master. A bond of a sort was instantly forged between me and him; a bond — inner, invisible, yet real. This bond ignited within me great love for Maharshi and an unfailing trust in him. When I learnt about Maharshi, I was already on a spiritual path: among other exercises I practised concentration on the spiritual Heart according to instructions of K. Weinfurter. It should be said that although I firmly believed in Maharshi, I did not know his teaching. I wasn't even aware that some of his works were published in Czech. Strange, isn't it? It was only by the end of the 50s that I, thanks to Petr Klíma, got the opportunity to read Maharshi's teaching (in English). I plunged myself into studying Maharshi's works, but alas, I could not understand the least what the Self was; the Self he mentioned so often and taught inquiry on. Nevertheless, I persevered. I kept racking my brains and gradually started to practise Self-enquiry.

Due to the communist oppression, no spiritual literature could be published then. Nor was it possible to order such literature abroad. Therefore, I started to write letters to Ramanashram and was very grateful when the ashram's management answered my pleading. Since then, Ramanashram supplied me with books continually. To my surprise, the parcels with books never got lost. Since the communist secret police service rarely missed the opportunity to seize and destroy spiritual literature, this was quite strange!

To compensate for the shortage of spiritual literature, we copied spiritual texts from each other by means of a typewriter. Such copies were called *samizdats*. I too participated in making and distributing *samizdats*: I translated and typed many of Maharshi's works as well as of *advaita* treatises published by Ramanashram.

I also started to write my own works on *yoga* and mysticism. These works were based on my spiritual experience and attempted to give methodical instructions for spiritual practice. Neither my translations nor my works were circulated under my name because publishing spiritual literature was forbidden; the communist secret police vigorously persecuted any such activity. Some people even got into prison. Even I was blessed by the secret police's attention. I was brought before a court for 'disrupting socialist society'. This disrupting was nothing but my (then) completely private interest in *yoga*.

At the beginning of the 60's I—as a consequence of many years of spiritual practice—made a gradual transition to *atma vichara*. A great help in my endeavours was my master-in-a-body, Jaroslav Koei, who was already aware of his Self. With his support as well as Ramana Maharshi's inner guidance, I progressed step by step and finally succeeded: I became aware of my Self. Later on, I deepened and widened this awareness: first I learned to abide in the Self, then the experience of the Self transcended my body. I started to experience the Self everywhere and in everything. The world of forms became enveloped and permeated by awareness of the Self.

Ramana Maharshi's help to me manifested itself in numerous ways. His photograph, which I often fixed my eyes on, sometimes came to life. His look, otherwise neutral, became reserved or graciously smiling, depending on how I progressed on the spiritual path.

Once I had a vivid dream in which somebody unseen taught me *atma vichara* simply by making me do it. Who else could it be, than Ramana?

On 12th February 1981, Maharshi's grace manifested itself most emphatically. I experienced the moments when I felt Maharshi inside me before; only on this day, however, was this feeling marked by such a complete certainty. The whole experience is described in *The Mountain Path*, January 1983, p. 5, in the article "How Sri Bhagavan Blessed Me". The following is an excerpt from the article:

> All of a sudden I felt very clearly that Ramana Maharshi was inside me. More accurately, I felt—and partly saw as well—that his body, with all its characteristic traits, was inside me, inside my body. Simultaneously, my body assumed the form of Sri Ramana. My body as well as his were somehow blended and united, though I perceived his body less clearly than mine. Somewhat later, the Self—conscious and blissful Being—started to shine forth

from the centre of my chest. It shone very brightly and yet very softly. It was as if somebody switched on a light within me and *sat-chit-ananda* started to emanate in all directions. Consciousness of Being which I, with effort, experience as emptiness free of all manifest and tangible, grew considerably stronger. Besides, it acquired bliss which otherwise accompanies my experience of the Self quite rarely. With effort, I can evoke an experience of the two aspects of the Supreme reality, Consciousness and Being, and abide in them. But the third aspect, Bliss, resists all my effort: it comes and goes without my knowing how and why.

In November 1989 the Communist government resigned. After a long time of oppression, the Czechs could, once again, express their spirituality outwardly. They could publish books, gather freely, meditate together, hold public lessons and meditations, and organize meditation retreats.

I wanted to publish the books with Maharshi's teaching but the beginnings were not easy. Since the profit-minded publishers had no interest in such a project, self-publishing was the only way possible. The problem was that I, a retired pensioner, did not have a capital such a business required. The only thing I could do was to gather my savings for old age and start publishing small and cheap books, reinvesting the profit made. A few friends helped me.

In this way, I have so far managed to publish nine books about Ramana Maharshi (Ramanashram gave me kind permission). The books contain Maharshi's teaching as well as his dialogues with the devotees. Among others, I published the following books: *The Collected Works, Maharshi's Gospel, Conscious Immortality, Day by Day with Bhagavan, Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi.*

Besides, I have translated and published several books on non-dual philosophy that Ramana Maharshi often recommended and quoted. Among these are *Ribhu Gita*, a digest from *Yoga Vasistha, Tripura Rahasya, Kaivalya Navaneeta*, and *Ellam Ondre*. I have also published quite a few of my own works that deal with the practice of *atma vichara* and convey my experience with this technique, e.g. *Jnana Gita* or *The Textbook of Atmavichara*.

From the books I published, thousands of Czechs and Slovaks learnt about Ramana Maharshi's teaching. Many of them started practising it. As a result, a great interest arose in collective meditations where *atma vichara* would be practised. In response, I started to hold two hour public meditations. These meditations take place several times a year in several cities in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, and are attended by a large number of people.

Besides, week-long meditation retreats are held about ten times a year. On these retreats, we meditate six hours a day, aiming at Self-absorption. The retreats are usually attended by 40 to 80 meditators,

sometimes by more. Both the public meditations and the retreats are at a high level. Many attendants reach an experience of their Self, others stabilize and deepen this experience.

All this is happening only by the grace of Ramana Maharshi, one of the greatest sages ever to live, and by the power of his "I AM". I will never cease to be grateful to Maharshi that he brought me to him and supported me on the path of Self-enquiry. My practice has proven his teaching utterly truthful and his method, Self-enquiry, extremely effective. This is also the experience of several hundreds of Czechs and Slovaks who practise this method.

When I look at the plethora of spiritual teachers and schools that teach everything possible except how to realize the Self, I am truly frightened what could have happened to me, hadn't Maharshi taken care of me. The more I realize this, the more I honour and esteem Maharshi and the more I feel grateful to Him.

The popularity of Maharshi's teaching and the practice of Self-enquiry in the Czech and Slovak republics is remarkable. This popularity demonstrates the readiness of the Czech seekers and the honesty of their endeavour to realize the Self. Above all, however, it demonstrates how true were Maharshi's words that a mere existence of a *jnani* impacts the world more than anything he could do. The *jnani's* silence, his inner, invisible but real emanation, is the greatest power. Maharshi himself made no visible effort to spread his teaching. He held no public lessons, he did not travel over the world, but his power clearly manifested itself wherever there was fertile soil. The case of the Czech and Slovak republics proves this quite clearly.

SRI BHAGAVAN'S NARRATION OF EPISODE AT TIRUCHULI

Chella Battar (Daivasikamani Battar), temple priest of Tiruchuzhi, has come. Bhagavan pointed him out to me and said, "Whenever I see him I am reminded of the cut I received on my left finger and the scar it has left. I was about eight years old and he about three. His house was third from ours. Before his birth and when I was a child I used to be frequently taken to their house and petted as almost their child. It was Pongal time and this child came to our house with one hand holding a new *Arival Manai* (blade fastened to a piece of wood for slicing vegetables), and the other hand dragging a long stout sugar cane. I hastened to cut the sugar cane for the child and accidentally got a cut between my thumb and left forefinger. I quietly asked the child to go back to his house and ran to the hospital and got my wound treated. It is this gentleman's son that was here sometime back, called Karpurasundaram, who is now doing *puja* in 'Sundara Mandiram' at Tiruchuzhi."

— *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, **entry for 31-10-45.**

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Means and Ends

By Sadhu Arunachala (A. W. Chadwick)

THE modern world would seem almost to justify means by ends. I have never lived under a dictatorship and so have no first hand experience of these regimes, but it would seem they consider any means legitimate so long as the ends can be achieved.

How is it possible for anything to produce its opposite? How can hate produce love, violence non-injury, or war peace? And this is where the present mad race for armaments is so absurdly fallacious, while each nation is so swift to justify its own part in it, because of fear of its neighbour. So fear breeds fear and the endless cycle turns slowly on its axis.

But Bhagavan was insistent on means and taught that we should leave the ends to look after themselves. He was essentially an individualist. 'How can you help the world until you have helped yourself?' he would ask. 'Don't worry about what other people are doing or saying, you have quite enough to do in worrying about yourself.' 'You want to reform the world, do you? First reform yourself and then it will be time enough to think about the world.' It was always the same. Perfect yourself and the world will automatically be found to be perfect. And did not Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa teach exactly the same in his day?

If asked about Self Realisation, what it was like, or what would be our state in the future, Bhagavan would always reply: 'Why worry about something in the future? It is the *here* and *now* which are important. You *are* Self-realised always but only ignorant of the fact.' The *Now*, the present moment, is the important thing, not some mythical future, because space and time are only modes of individuality; for the Self they do not exist, only 'Now' exists.

Materialists imagine that possession brings happiness. Increase the number of gadgets to the maximum, give abundant food and luxury, and life will be bliss. But they are looking frantically without for what can only be found within. This seems to be the fault of most people today. They imagine that things and situations in themselves give happiness; they constantly try to repeat experiences which

Reproduced from *The Mountain Path*, January 1974.

once caught them in a mood of receptivity and, constantly failing to find what they so ardently desire, they become disillusioned in consequence.

'It's all right for you, but who is going to help the poor suffering world?', one hears on every side from the reformers.

But it would be useless to point out to them that for all their efforts they have made a pretty good mess of things up to now; that to try and help others before you have succeeded in helping yourself is, to say the least of it, futile; that this senseless search for ends is waste of time and that means and ends are really one. For has it not been said: 'The search itself is the goal?' Which summed up is just 'Be'. Don't spend your time looking to the future, but realise *here* and *now* that you are *always* the same, the Self.

Actually there are no *ends,* for there has never been a beginning!

Maya Panchakam

(Five Verses on Maya)

By Shankaracharya

1. Although I am the Pure Awareness which is unparalleled, eternal, whole without parts and entirely conceptless, notions like the world, God and the soul *(jiva)* arise in me. This is the work of Maya[1] who is extremely clever in accomplishing the impossible.

2. Maya, who is extremely clever in accomplishing the impossible, distracts even those who have closely studied hundreds of *Vedic* and *Vedantic* works. She makes them hanker for riches and other things and behave like animals. What a wonder!

3. Maya, who is extremely clever in accomplishing the impossible, attaches what is non-dual, unbroken Consciousness and Bliss to (the world) composed of (elements) like ether, fire and sun and tosses it about violently on the ocean of *samsara.*

4. Maya, who is extremely clever in accomplishing the impossible, gives rise to the notion of 'I' and notions of *brahmin, vaisya,* and so on as well as the delusion of wife, son and house in what is pure Awareness and Bliss entirely free from distinctions like caste, colour and attributes.

5. Although the Supreme Being has no parts and is free from all distinctions like Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, even the wise are deluded into thinking that there are differences like Vishnu, Siva and so on. This is the work of Maya who is very clever at accomplishing the impossible.

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[1] *Maya is* generally used in the feminine gender.

Ramana Maharshi and How to Take Responsibility

By Douglas E. Harding

Question: Should we not think of and work for the welfare of the country?
Maharshi: First take care of yourself and the rest will follow.

LIFE has a distressing way of presenting us with dilemmas — seemingly insoluble problems about what to do and what not to do. Not so much problems with *no* answer as predicaments with *two* quite contradictory answers. We don't know where we stand. Issues aren't clear cut. Right and wrong have a habit of changing places. You might say that life is a cleft stick, a game impossible to win, a continuing choice of evils.

One of the most troublesome of these dilemmas is whether to watch life from the sidelines or to get involved, whether to decline or welcome responsibility, whether (in current slang) to cop out or to cop in.

The world's great teachers don't make it any easier for us to decide. They seem only to add to the confusion. Take Jesus for example. On the one hand, in his Sermon on the Mount, he tells us to relax, to let tomorrow take care of itself, and leave everything to the hidden Power that makes the lilies grow. On the other hand, in the Parable of the Talents, he heaps praise on the busy, duty-bound, responsible citizen, and cheerfully consigns the unprofitable layabout to hell. Or take Nisargadatta Maharaj: "As long as you have the idea of influencing events, liberation is not for you. The very notion of doership, of being a cause, is bondage." And yet, again and again, he insists that conscious effort is essential, and indeed that earnestness is the decisive factor.

Finally, take Ramana Maharshi himself: "No one succeeds without effort," he declares. "The successful few owe their success to their perseverance." And then immediately he adds: "A passenger in a train would be silly to keep his load on his head. Let him put it down; he will find that the load reaches the destination all the same. Similarly, let us not pose as the doers, but resign ourselves to the guiding power."

Well, which shall we do — carry our own load, or dump it? Help others carry their heavy loads, or accept no responsibility for them either?

The dilemma is far from being a merely intellectual or theological puzzle. It is real

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and it hurts — so much so that some of us are in danger of being torn apart by it. There is no 'right' choice. Whether we take the way of just letting things happen, or the way of strenuous intervention, we are in for trouble. The life of the drop-out who exerts no effort and makes no decisions and accepts no responsibility for himself (let alone for his fellow man) — what sort of life is that? As for his opposite, the 'square' — the hard-working, conscientious, load-carrying, public-spirited man — we all know the compromises and frustrations and anxieties that are coming to *him*, to say nothing of the decay and death that will shortly terminate himself and all his well-laid enterprises.

So much for the dilemma. This article, with the help of Ramana Maharshi, is about its radical solution, a truly practical one which we can immediately start to apply in our everyday living. But first let us take stock of the human situation of what it is to be someone in the world, a living thing.

It is the very nature of every creature to assume responsibility for its own welfare, its separate thinghood. Thus it takes up a portion of the world's space, filling out this volume to the exclusion of other things. And it needs a constant supply of other things, to survive; it persists only by competing for and incorporating them (we call the process *feeding*, of course). In general, its behaviour is aimed at the survival of this thing at the expense of other things. Now this unrelenting self-seeking isn't merely a necessity of life: it is the life-thrust itself. You don't say of a vegetable in your garden that it generously takes less than its fair share of water and sunlight, or praise a piglet for not being greedy at the trough. On the contrary, you dismiss them as unhealthy weaklings, insufficiently alive.

It isn't different with people. Let's face it; a vital, truly alive man is one who knows what he wants, and goes after it, and gets it. He is self-reliant, energetic, audacious, determined, fully co-operative where it suits his purpose and at other times quite ruthless. Above all, he doesn't moan about his bad luck, his crippling circumstances, or what God and his parents did to him. Instead, he takes himself for better or worse as his own property, for which he alone is responsible. And insofar as he avoids this responsibility, and lacks purpose and drive and a strong sense of doership, he falls short of manhood. You could charitably call him a retiring, humble, self-effacing man; or, more honestly, a tired man, a failed man, a sick man, and no more deserving of our admiration than the wilting plant or the under-sized piglet is. To be manly is to take responsibility for one's particular portion of the world and all the life in it, and to live out that life zestfully, without apologies or holding back. Vitality and responsibility come to much the same thing.

What price, then, the Sermon on the Mount, with its insistence on passivity? And what shall we say of the Seer who is happy to witness life going by, and careful not to get involved in it? Are the Liber-

ated wilting, diluted, failed, irresponsible humans? Obviously they are not! Quite the contrary, they are specially alive, and in their own (sometimes concealed) way marvellously determined and energetic and (ultimately) successful, and in fact the very opposite of those sad humans who (for some reason or no reason) lack vital force. There is a world of difference between the drop-out and the Seer, no matter how alike their appearance and behaviour may happen to be.

And the difference is simply this: the drop-out thinks he's some kind of person (for example, a care-free person), whereas the Seer sees he's not a person at all. The one imagines he's a thing in the world, while the other perceives himself as the no-thing that contains the world. And not only is the Seer the Space in which *things* happen, but also the Space in which *all the contradictions and dilemmas that afflict things* happen, without affecting the Space in the slightest. In his capacity (*verb. sap*) as Container of things, the Space which is also their Source and Reality, he *is* the reconciliation of whatever divides them. Thus the Seer resolves the dilemma of passivity versus activity, of detachment *versus* involvement, of witnessing *versus* responsibility, in the only way they can be resolved — by being the Source of *both*. As their Source and Spring, he is upstream of all tributaries. He is the Stem of the cleft stick. He is the undivided Divider.

And you, dear Reader, are that Source. You are not, and never have been, a man or woman or child. Intrinsically, therefore, you are free of all the contradictions and tearings-apart that such creatures are subject to.

What is a human being? It is, as we've already observed, a something— opaque, solid, small. It isn't empty of itself but full of itself of its own material. It occupies and packs out with flesh and blood a few thousand cubic inches, thus excluding other creatures from that volume. It exists by closing itself to others, by being distant from them, distinct from them, unlike them. It proclaims itself alone, announcing to an alien world "Here am I! Keep off! No entry!"

Are you like this, in your own experience, at this moment?

If so, how do you manage to easily *take in* this page, right now? How else but by giving it room, by disappearing in its favour? Have you anything where you are, now, to keep it out with? Aren't you built open? Aren't you an empty vessel for filling with anything and everything, all the way from the stars to this printing? And when you look up from this page to the face of your friend over there, don't you take in and take on that face? Or, if you *aren't* accommodation for things, but just one of them, how do you account for their brilliance at this moment, compared with the obscurity of their observer, not to mention his absence? All you need to settle these questions is to stop thinking long enough just to take a look. And then, if you really do experience yourself as that small and opaque object you see in your

mirror, if you really are what you look like *to others*, why then you are a human being, and that's that! But if you really are what you look like to *yourself* — Room for all things to come and go in — why then you are God, and should stop all this pretence of being human.

As God, as the Space for all and the Source of all, you are responsible for all. There is no second Power. You did it all, you are doing it all. But notice now whether this Space that you are is *efforting* its contents. Do you, as filled with this scene, have any sense of intending it, of contriving it and putting it together, of causing and sustaining it? It is for you, who alone are responsible for it, to say. Isn't it rather that everything flows spontaneously, without motive or taking thought, from your Being, a sort of spin-off from Who you are? Isn't Maharshi right when he says, "No motive can be attributed to that power..... God is untouched by activities, which take place in His presence."?

Here is the perfect reconciliation between the detachment that witnesses all and the involvement that originates all. It was the false notion that you are a human being which gave rise to the dilemma, the contradiction between the Sermon on the Mount and the Parable of the Talents. Your True Nature is the Paradox to end all paradoxes: there is nothing that is *not* you and nothing that *is* you; this Space *is* and *isn't* its contents; you care and you don't care; you control everything, and it just happens.

And, after all, these conclusions make good sense. The responsibility that a *man* feels, his sense of being a doer controlling this and that, is illusory. Every event in his life is conditioned by the other events constituting the universe; it takes the Whole to make every part what it is. Behind every happening and every thing lies only one Cause, namely the First Cause which is God. Attributing particular causes to particular events, and feeling personally responsible for any of them, is quite unscientific. The universe is strictly indivisible, and the only way to take responsibility for some of it is to take responsibility for the lot. *Which is to be God.*

You as God are responsible for everything, and manage it all perfectly well — and this without any sense of responsibility or good management. How can you know this for sure? Only by being yourself now and consulting your own first-hand experience. Only by ceasing to masquerade as a man, a woman, a child.

The answer to the problem of personal responsibility is not to give up feeling responsible, but to take it to the limit — where it vanishes. You *are* the answer. See who you are, and the problem at once dissolves.

And, you can say with Maharshi:

> Action forms no bondage. Bondage is only the false notion: 'I am the doer'..... Be fixed in the Self and act according to nature without the sense of doership..... Attending to the Self includes attending to the work..... The work will not bind you. It will go on automatically.

An Experience of *Kundalini*

By Unnamulai

I WAS in the midst of packing to return to Tiruvannamalai after spending the hottest months in the hills. My children couldn't stand the heat of the plains. The house which had been found for me was right out of town, facing a magnificent mountain and had not been inhabited for some years, so it was barely furnished. I had to bring even kitchen utensils, so it can be imagined what packing there was. It was a terrific rush and with very little help.

It was in the thick of this that it happened. A sort of lassitude came over me, but a most pleasant lassitude. From the base of my spine a tingling feeling arose as if a thousand ants were climbing up. "I must have fever", I thought — "but a most delightful fever, so let it be". All thought of packing or going or any urgent work just vanished. I simply rested, whether sitting or lying down I don't remember. The ascent continued, stopping at various points along my spine. I particularly remember it was at the base of my neck. Then it burst through the crown of my head with the blaze of a million suns — the splendour of it! Ecstasy which no words could describe! There was nothing to be perceived — nothing now to describe. Only this unimaginable feeling of indescribably blissful well being. There was nobody else. There was nothing else. So that's it!

How long it lasted — a second, an eternity — I cannot tell. Then I returned to normal body-consciousness and the world emerged again — but how drab! It was like being thrust back into a cage, in spite of the after-glow of the experience.

At that time I knew nothing of *Kundalini* and I have never practised it.

On my return to Tiruvannamalai I came across Sir John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power* and there read about the *chakras* and verified my experience. I did not mention it to Sri Maharshi until sometime later when I was asked to go through Heinrich Zimmer's German work *Der Weg Zum Selbst* in which he speaks about *Kundalini* from a theoretical standpoint. In this connection I told Sri Maharshi that my experience was

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different and wrote out an account of it. He perused this very attentively and did not return it to me but gave it to the attendant to file.

Some years later I heard a certain Swami tell his disciples that when *Kundalini* bursts through the *sahasrara* in the crown of the head the person is realized. I did not want to raise this question before everybody, so I spoke with him privately about it later, when I begged to differ. I told him about my experience and said that it was only sporadic and not a permanent change of state. He asked me about it in great detail and was surprised but obviously convinced because he said, "You are moving in Grace; just persevere."

SPACELESS AND TIMELESS

By Wei Wu Wei

I am not extended in space, I have no duration in time,
I have neither extension nor absence of extension,
Neither presence nor absence of duration,
Because only objects can extend, only objects have duration,
And I am not an object.
But the absence
Of the presence and of the absence
Of 'space' and 'time'
Is what I AM.

Therefore
I am Here,
Every 'here', but no 'where'.
I am Now,
Every 'now', but no 'ever'.
See?
What are you looking for?
There is nothing to be seen,
Either within 'mind' or reflected without.
Looking?
You can't see what is looking.
Nor can you see me,
For there isn't a 'me' to be seen.
Why?
Because I am the looking,
All looking,
And all that any thing could be.

Our Debt of Gratitude to Our Parents

Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma

OUR parents are instrumental in bringing about many improvements in our lives. We owe our very existence to them, and so we will always be in debt to them. Is it possible to release oneself from this debt ?

Numerous indeed are parents' acts of self-sacrifice. They sacrifice their time, energy and money so that their children have the advantage of a good education; they provide the basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter, and much more, in order that their offspring can live in comfort; when there are outbreaks of epidemics they minister to their sick children; they love to cheer up their sons and daughters who are in low spirits; they constantly counsel children with psychological problems; wealthy and thoughtful parents sometimes build special vacation homes for their children. The best type of parents, the conscientious ones, introduce their children to spiritual literature and thereby stimulate their interest in leading lives that are morally right and good.

Modern parents have to dissuade young persons from becoming addicted to hallucinogenic drugs, tobacco and alcohol. The younger generation should be taught to avoid gambling, like the plague. Parents would be failing in their duty if they do not explain to their kids that promiscuous behaviour is detrimental to health; it is also contrary to traditional moral values. We often hear the expression 'becoming proud parents' as if the mere act of mothering or fathering a child were a great achievement! Any raging beast who sleeps around can become a father many times over. Whereas any fellow who behaves irresponsibly can produce progeny and thereafter neglect to exercise due care. Only parents with a great sense of responsibility would play a major role in introducing a spiritual dimension to the lives of children under their charge.

We are living in a pleasure-orientated world wherein the institution of marriage seems to be falling into decline. Because of matrimonial difficulties and other reasons the divorce rate is increasing, which in turn results in one-parent families or single-parent families. In such families, provided the roles of father and mother are rolled into one, a child's sense of deprivation can be somewhat lessened. Similarly, a child without biological parents is not necessarily filled with a sense of loss so long as a boy or girl in this

situation is showered with affection and unfailing support. In our so-called highly civilised societies there are also, alas, thousands of children who were orphaned in various wars. These pitiable children are an eloquent testimony to our love of violence and our basic barbarism. It is proof that we are anything but gentle and loving human beings.

It is not by choice that one is born into a particular family. We cannot select our parents or our family members. We do not know the *karmic* reasons why some have biological parents, whereas others have adoptive ones. It says a lot about the workings of the law of *karma* that we have had no say whatsoever in these matters. It is possible that we were closely associated with our parents in previous lives, either as our nearest relations or as our closest friends. It is well known that strong attachments to people formed in past lives can continue in the present and future ones.

We have considered the question of the role of parents in acting in the best interests of their children. Equally important is the following issue: What is the most excellent way to do one's duty when caring for ageing parents? Incidentally, the expression 'acting out of duty' is often used but unfortunately it is suggestive of a certain lack of warm feelings. Therefore it is necessary to pose the question: Do I 'care' for my parents, only because I feel duty-bound, or am I genuinely concerned about my parents out of deep affection for them? In other words, do I force myself 'to care' for my parents just to avoid the emergence of a conscience-stricken emotional state as a result of treating them with total indifference ?

Once I made the acquaintance of a very successful lawyer in late middle age who used to refer rudely to his parents as 'that old woman' and 'that old man'. After he had quarrelled with them he ran away from home during his adolescence. When his parents were separated, he really hit the bottle. The lawyer treated his parents with contempt and avoided meeting them even in times of crisis. When his poor father suffered a severe heart attack he refused to visit him in hospital. He could at least have offered a few words of comfort to his ailing father. When I strongly advised the lawyer to overlook all the past failings of his parents and stressed the importance of being a dutiful son, he became very argumentative as though he were addressing a court. Finally he asked me to mind my own business! Never must one bear resentment towards the parents, of all people, even if their state is one of utter moral degeneration.

Buddha taught that parents should always be treated with the respect that they deserve:

> Those families, O monks, dwell with Brahma where at home the parents are respected by their children. Those families dwell with the ancient teachers where at home the parents are respected by their children. Those fami-

lies dwell with the ancient deities where at home the parents are respected by the children. Those families dwell with those worthy of worship where at home the parents are respected by their children.

"Brahma", monks, is a term for father and mother. "The early teachers" is a term for father and mother. "The early deities" is a term for father and mother. "Those worthy of worship" is a term for father and mother. And why? Parents are of great help to their children, they bring them up, feed them and show them the world.[1]

The Venerable Moggallana and the Venerable Sariputta were the two chief disciples of Buddha. Moggallana is best remembered for his extraordinary psychic powers; he excelled all other monks in this field. The *karmic* reason for Moggallana's tragic demise is traceable to his past patricidal and matricidal deeds.

In one of his former lives Moggallana had a young wife who was unfortunately hellbent on getting rid of her old and blind parents-in-law (i.e. Moggallana's own parents). Legend has it that she was very jealous of the fact that all her husband's attention was being given to his sick and elderly parents instead of herself. When she commanded her husband to kill his parents, he hesitated at first but later agreed to do it. One morning he secretly took his parents in a cart into a forest and left it there. After some time he returned to the scene and started mimicking the sounds and voices of a gang of robbers. Next while beating his parents he tried to create the impression that all these violent deeds were being perpetrated by robbers. He thereby deceived his unsuspecting parents. Being blind, they believed that their son had all the time been present with them.

'Son, flee now, flee,' they shouted out, cautioning him to protect himself from robbers. How they loved Moggallana! How paradoxical that he was clubbing his parents to death while, at the same time, they were trying to preserve his life!

Despite his exalted spiritual status as an Arhat, Moggallana had to pay dearly for murdering his parents in a life of a bygone era. As a general rule, parents are much loved and revered by their children in most civilised parts of the world. It is inconceivable that he had carefully planned and executed such a heinous crime.

Several times some thugs surrounded the house where Moggallana was staying but on account of his supernatural abilities he managed to escape through the keyhole. However, they caught him on a later occasion and beat him severely. He was on the verge of death. But before dying he visited Buddha for the last time.

Buddha spoke of parents in glowing terms and reminded us of our enormous debt of gratitude to them:

[1] *Anguttara Nikaya*, IV. 63.

> I declare, O monks, that there are two persons one can never repay. Who are the two? One's mother and father.
>
> Even if one should carry about one's mother on one shoulder and one's father on the other, and while doing so should live a hundred years, reach the age of a hundred years; and if one should attend to them by anointing them with salves, by massaging, bathing and rubbing their limbs, and they should even void their excrements there — even by that would one not do enough for one's parents, one would not repay them. Even if one were to establish one's parents as the supreme lords and rulers over this earth so rich in the seven treasures, one would not do enough for them, one would not repay them.
>
> But, O monks, one who encourages his unbelieving parents, settles and establishes them in faith; who encourages his immoral parents, settles and establishes them in virtue; who encourages his stingy parents, settles and establishes them in generosity; who encourages his ignorant parents, settles and establishes them in wisdom — such a one, O monks, does enough for his parents: he repays them and more than repays them for what they have done.[2]

Parents on account of infirmities of old age, or other reasons, may become unsteady and be in need of help themselves. In such circumstances, the children can exert a beneficial influence on the parents!

There is a famous Buddhist maxim that the gift of the *Dhamma* exceeds all other gifts. There is no greater favour that one can do our parents than that of introducing them to the teachings of the Enlightened One. They should be presented with spiritual literature and taken to lectures, meetings and various societies where religious matters are discussed. Elderly persons may lack the incentive for studying serious subjects or for visiting temples for the purpose of conversing with monks. However, they can be informed about stimulating forums for religious debate and sermons on the radio. Many are the methods of educating them on the spiritual life.

The spiritual advice that sons and daughters proffer to parents may fall on deaf ears. Some parents find it difficult to regard their adult offspring as grown-ups. In such a situation it is best to teach by example rather than by precept. Parents might want to become keen followers of their sons and daughters who are paragons of virtue — one never knows.

If the parents get into the habit of grumbling about their health or complaining about people who are annoying, one should of course give them a hearing, but it is also necessary to tell them that suffering is part and parcel of *samsara*. If the parents are stingy and excessively

[2] *Anguttara Nikaya*, II. IV. 2.

attached to their possessions, one can advise them that the wealth one acquires in life is not for storing selfishly but for sharing with the needy. They will learn a lot about the virtue of generosity when they see their children giving alms to the poor, to ascetics and *bhikkus*. They can be shown the sheer joy of being helpful to homeless people and refugees from war zones. When parents observe that their sons and daughters have achieved true happiness, by leading chaste lives, they will start pondering over their past mistakes. As a general rule it is the parents who preach to their progeny the virtues of abstaining from sex, but there are times when children can convincingly demonstrate to their parents that moral purity ensures one's own peace of mind.

Their memory should live on after beloved parents have passed away; never must they be relegated to the limbo of forgotten things. It is a long established practice in Buddhist lands to remember them regularly. In their name people make donations to charity, or there are alms givings; food is lavishly served to monks, nuns, friends, relations and animals; the merit accumulated from such deeds are then transferred to those loved ones who are no longer with us. When such meritorious deeds are being performed for the benefit of deceased parents, with all one's heart and mind one solemnly says, 'May my dear departed mother and my dear departed father be well and happy! Wherever they may be at present, may they be full of joy! May they attain *Nirvana*!'

THE SOURCE OF THOUGHTS

Visitor: **I am told that according to your school I must find out the source of my thoughts. How am I to do it?**

Bhagavan: **I have no school. However it is true that one should trace the source of all thoughts.**

Visitor: **Suppose I have the thought 'horse' and try to trace its source; I find that it is due to memory and the memory in its turn is due to prior perception of the object 'horse', but that is all.**

Bhagavan: **Who asked you to think about all that? All those are also thoughts. What good will it do you to go on thinking about memory and perception? It will be endless, like the old dispute — which came first, the tree, or the seed. Ask who has this perception and memory. That 'I' that has the perception and memory, whence does it arise? Find out that. Because perception or memory or any other experience only comes to that 'I'. You don't have such experiences during sleep, and yet you say that you existed during sleep. And you exist now too. That shows that the 'I' continues while other things come and go.**

— *Day by Day with Bhagavan,* **entry for 3-7-46.**