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First Darshan

THE FIRST DARSHAN of Arunachala the sacred mountain is, for most people, a momentous experience and an unexpected one, especially for those who thought they had come solely to visit the ashram of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and found, as soon as they reached the physical presence of Arunachala, a profound response which resonated deep in the heart.

Bhagavan regarded Arunachala as his Guru and once he came to the Mountain in 1896 he never again left its physical presence. If he was attached to anything in this world, it was Arunachala. One can see the strong intimacy between them in the photos taken while he was on the Hill. The gleam in his eyes has a special brightness. His demeanour is regal. He gives the impression of immensity. He is at home in the cave of the heart. He is at one with himself.

Arunachala, sacred to Shiva since time immemorial, powerfully influences most of us in one way or another. Sometimes it hits newcomers with dramatic impact; more often it is subtle and elusive. We are drawn into the net before we know what has happened and there are people who are prepared to spend the rest of their lives at the feet of the Mountain. They feel bereft when, for whatever reason, they have to leave its ambience. On the other

hand there are people who are bitterly disappointed. They have read or heard about the miracle of Arunachala and come prepared to be struck by spiritual lightning. We all ache, in this Kali Yuga, for instant results. If the Hill were to stun them with its impact these people would be awed and thrilled and know that they had come to the right place. Generally however, Arunachala works in a very subtle fashion. While we are waiting for dramatic action and imagining that nothing has happened, the Hill has entered our minds and hearts and changed us forever. We may not even notice until we leave.

First impressions can make the deepest impact upon us and with Arunachala it is the unexpected power of its presence that captures our imagination. If only for a second our chattering minds cease their production of thoughts. One of the attributes of this Mountain is to still the mind.

The first opportunity for Bhagavan to see the distant peak of Arunachala was at the Atulyanatheswara Temple near Tirukoilur. One wonders if in fact he did so or whether the state of his samadhi was so deep that he was not aware of the fact. In later years he spoke about this time as being like a speck carried along by a flood. At this particular place he could perhaps have had the first darshan of his Guru, Arunachala. It is said in the accounts of Bhagavan's visit to the temple that it occurred by chance. He had walked from Mambalapattu railway station to Arayaninallur, a distance of 16 kms. As if by accident he stopped at the temple doors to rest after the exhausting afternoon walk in the sun. Soon an attendant came along to open the shrine for the evening rituals. Bhagavan followed him and sat down in the pillared hall. He immediately saw a brilliant light and thought it came from the image of the god in the inner sanctum. He got up and walked around to trace the source of this illumination but it disappeared as mysteriously as it had arrived. He realised that it was a supernatural light he had seen.

He would perhaps have learnt from the *pujari* who performed the rituals about the significance of this place. It was here, ages ago, that one of the four great Tamil saints, Tirujnanasambandar, saw the sacred peak of Arunachala for the first time. There are feet carved in stone situated in the outer precincts to commemorate the spot.

Though it is not recorded, one would like to think that the *pujari* probably indicated to Bhagavan where he should position himself in order to view Arunachala from the same spot. Tirujnanasambandar had looked out over what was then a thick forest and saw a sight which astonished him, the mythical hill, Arunachala, hovering in the far distance. In his turn Bhagavan would have seen the object of his search.

Circumstances had conspired to bring Bhagavan to his beloved Arunachala by the same route as Tirujnanasambandar whose pervasive influence has been so important in Tamil spirituality. In later years Bhagavan would point out the value of a particular scripture, *Sivabhaktavilasam*, which includes a poignant section about Tirujnanasambandar's journey to Arunachala. Bhagavan was aware of the rich heritage of the Tamils and his knowledge of the scriptures both popular and obscure was substantial.

In our present day it is more likely we come to Arunachala by bus or car or train. It is a different world we inhabit from the one of 1896, which ushered in a new chapter in the long line of Tamil saints. Our motives however are similar in that we regard Arunachala as a panacea. We come with hope, with anxiety, with faith. We may ask ourselves what wild chase we have embarked upon without really knowing what has compelled us to do so. We are all very human although it is fairly certain that we have been dissatisfied with our life in the material world. Many, indeed most people who set out on the spiritual quest are misfits in the ordinary world. It stands to reason that if one fitted in well with the neighbours and their designer clothes and newest cars, or could relate to the office and its hierarchy, if one craved and could enjoy all the forms of entertainment available, then there would be no need or desire to look any further for something else. Seekers are rarely comfortable with what they already have.

When we take the slow early morning train from Villupuram along the same route as Bhagavan, we have the opportunity to catch the crisp light as it throws into sharp relief the solid reassuring Mountain with its broad shoulders. It is easy to be captured by the initial impact on this journey. Each aspect of the Mountain has, in the cosmology of Arunachala a significance. If we read the signs aright they would reveal a subtle meaning. And if we are persistent the answer to our quest will come; perhaps not today, but when we are prepared for it.

Yet another approach is from Krishnagiri and seen from that western road the Hill has a younger, starker outline. From the north on the Vellore road one sees the dramatic power of Arunachala as it rises abruptly, sheer with its mammoth rocks exposed. In physical terms Arunachala is a modest hill but we call it a Mountain because it is so in our minds and hearts. If we would but look past the camouflage in our approach to the heart of the Mountain then we would become aware of how much is concealed by the mundane outer aspect. Arunachala has the power to transform us.

But more often than not we travel the eastern Tindivanam highway past the unhurried bullock carts and the speeding buses and cars in pursuit of some urgent deadline. Have you ever on the road towards Arunachala peered into the oncoming rush of trees and wondered when the first sight would

be? Have you ever wondered why this almost compulsive search takes hold of you?

In former days when travelling along this route the first sighting of Arunachala was at a small bridge. The traffic would slow down and between the tamarind trees a glimpse of Arunachala would appear at right angles to the road. The immediate feeling was one of reassurance.

Now the road is straighter and unless one is alert, the first moment can pass unnoticed until suddenly the Hill is there larger than life. It is like a mother who accepts us unconditionally and we know it. A subtle resonance is felt both spiritually and also in our physical bodies. That is why there is an involuntary relaxation of the mind. We are that much closer to home.

We speak about the various physical aspects of Arunachala as if the Mountain was alive. It is indeed. We can walk on it, we can feel the dry brown rocks beneath our feet and touch them with our hands and yet that which fascinates us still eludes our grasp. One of the mystical meanings of Annamalai, the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit Arunachala, is "that which cannot be approached". It is so subtle we cannot contain it with our limited minds.

The word "Self" is used frequently to describe our true nature but it is an elusive word and doesn't seem apt because it can so easily be confused with the personal sense of I, our ego. But in regard to Arunachala the description of it as the Self does seem fitting. Bhagavan himself once said that Arunachala is ourselves. The Hill is really an analogy of its devotees. The physical body composed of earth, rocks and trees corresponding to skin, bone and blood. We look at the pile of rocks with our physical eyes. We are seeking our true inner selves, our spiritual truth. We are doing this within the ambit of a Hill that is in truth Lord Shiva and whose impact on almost everyone is remarkable. Though it appears to be a gross heap of stones it encompasses our dreams and hopes and all our aspirations for something higher than the limitations we endure.

At the Atulyanatheswarar Temple the first sight of Arunachala was available to Bhagavan, the object of his long journey outlined in the late afternoon light. Could it be that it was Arunachala who first saw Bhagavan? We tend to assume the Mountain is inert but experience tells us it is very much alive and who can say that Arunachala Shiva is not on the lookout for his devotees? As Bhagavan has said:

"If the disciple takes one step towards the Guru, the Guru will take the other nine steps towards the disciple."

The next morning Bhagavan set forth once more on his journey to Tiruvannamalai. When he left Madurai he went out to meet not only his destiny but ours too, for without him we would not be following those footsteps towards the beckoning light today. ▲

Agni: The Fire of Self-Inquiry

by DAVID FRAWLEY

To question deeply who we really are is to create a friction at the core of the mind that naturally gives rise to an inner fire.

SELF-INQUIRY (ATMA-VICHARA), such as taught by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, is regarded as the simplest and most direct path to Self-realization. However, Self-inquiry is also very subtle and can be hard to accomplish even after years of dedicated practice. It depends upon a great power of concentration and acuity of mind along with an intense longing for liberation. One might say metaphorically that Self-inquiry requires a certain flame. It requires that we ourselves become a flame and that our lives become an offering to it. Without such an inner fire, Self-realization may elude us whatever else we may attempt. Therefore, it is important to look at Self-inquiry not simply as a mental practice but as an energetic movement of consciousness like the rising up of a great fire.

சென்னை சூழ அகில இயற்கைகளும் சிவநாம சிவசொல் சூழ மீனா

In this psychological age, particularly seekers coming from the West tend to confuse Self-inquiry with a kind of psychological self-examination, a looking into our temporal, bodily or ego self and its fears and desires as constituting a true search for the higher Self. One examines one's personal traumas and sorrows and looks for a psychological state of peace, clarity and joy, which is akin to a state of personal integration, as if it were true Self-realization.

However, according to Vedanta, the true Self that we are seeking to realize is not our human self but the universal Self, the Self that is present in all beings, in all bodies and in the entire world. It is the Self that is the witness of all time and space and transcends our psychology, which consists mainly of the incidentals and peculiarities of our personal circumstances and proclivities in life. The true Self resembles more the great powers of nature like fire, wind or sun than it does our personal thoughts and feelings. The search for this transcendent Self is very different than any psychological self-examination, which is at best a preliminary stage in its approach.

Other seekers with a more intellectual background tend to approach the Self in a conceptual or philosophical way, as if it were some category of cosmic existence to be appreciated by the rational mind. This too generally misses the living reality of the Self which has the power to consume the mind and cannot be approached by any mere logic or dialectic.

To question deeply about who we really are is to create a friction at the core of the mind that naturally gives rise to an inner fire. The inquiry 'Who am I?' is the ultimate stirring of the mind that brings forth an inner flame that can consume all other questions and doubts, like a fire burning dry grass. It takes us back to the core fire at the core of the mind, which is the inextinguishable light of the supreme I AM. That universal Self of pure light and consciousness shining deep within us is the real goal of our search.

சூழ மீனா சூழ அகில இயற்கைகளும் சிவநாம சிவசொல் சூழ மீனா

The Self in the Vedas and Upanishads is often symbolized by fire (Agni). The *Rig Veda* begins with the worship of Agni, who is the deity of the sacrifice. But who is this Agni and what is the nature of the sacrifice to be offered to it?

There are many forms of Agni in Vedic thought. Agni outwardly as fire and light and inwardly as life and consciousness pervades all things in the universe. In the Vedic view, Agni has three main cosmic (*adhidaivic*) or world forms as fire, lightning and the sun which are the ruling forces in the three worlds of the earth, the atmosphere and heaven. These are the three lights in the world of nature and the three manifestations of Paramatman, the Supreme Self that is the Divine Light and the light of all the worlds.

In addition, Agni has three main internal (*adhyatmic*) forms as speech (*vak*), prana and intelligence (*buddhi*), which are the ruling forces in the three aspects of our being as body, life and mind. They are the three lights of our internal nature and the three manifestations of the Soul or Jivatman, the consciousness or light principle within us.

These three internal forms of Agni create the three main paths of yoga practice. Agni's speech form is the basis of Mantra Yoga or the repetition of sacred sounds like OM or longer prayers like the Gayatri Mantra. Mantra practice creates an internal fire that helps purify the subconscious mind and make the mind receptive to meditation. Agni's prana form is the basis of Prana Yoga or the yogic breathing practices of pranayama. Pranayama increases the fire of prana (*Pranagni*) within us that cleanses the *nadis* of the subtle body and helps unloosen the knots or *granthis* of the heart. Agni's mind form is the basis of Dhyana Yoga or the yoga of meditation. The mind form of Agni or the *buddhi* is the discriminating part of the mind that allows us to distinguish truth from falsehood, reality from unreality and the Self from the not-Self. These three forms of Agni and their related yogic paths take us to the Jivatman or our individual Self and help us understand its basis in the Paramatman or Supreme Self.

There are many Vedic yajnas or fire-sacrifices, both external and internal. External yajnas consist of offerings of special substances of wood, ghee, milk or rice into the sacred fire. Internal yajnas consist of offerings of speech (mantra), breath (prana), and mind (meditation) into our internal fires. Vedic Yoga practices of mantra, pranayama and meditation are the main internal yajnas. Yoga itself is the inner sacrifice in all of its forms. The fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* explains these different internal sacrifices which reflect the different practices of Yoga including *pranayama* (Prana-yajna), *pratyahara* (Indriya-yajna), *dharana* (Mano-yajna) and *dhyana* (Buddhi-yajna). Each relates to a different form or aspect of Agni on the levels of body, breath and mind.

The highest Yajna is the Atma-Yajna or Self-sacrifice in which we offer the ego into the Self. This is the also the highest form of meditation or the mind-sacrifice, as the ego is the root of the mind. For this Yajna, the Agni is

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the Atman or true Self in the heart. Self-inquiry is perhaps the ultimate form of this Atma-Yajna or Self-sacrifice, in which the ego can be directly consumed. It is also called the knowledge-sacrifice (Jnana-yajna) that proceeds through the power of the fire of Self-knowledge (Jnanagni).

As the *Gita* states:

Preferable to the material sacrifices is the knowledge-sacrifice (Jnana-yajna),

All actions are comprehended in knowledge.

As a fire when enkindled burns up dry wood and turns it to ashes,

So the fire of knowledge (Jnana-agni) turns all our karmas to ashes.

Bhagavad Gita, IV: 33, 37

In this Self-sacrifice, the Self is not only the offering; the Self is the offerer and the fire in which the offering is given. In this regard we are again reminded of the words of the *Gita*:

Brahman is the process of offering. Brahman is the substance offered.

Brahman is the offerer, who places the offering into the fire of Brahman.

Brahman alone is attained by this action of absorption in Brahman.

Bhagavad Gita, IV:24

If we look at Self-inquiry as a Self-sacrifice or Atma-yajna, we gain a new perspective to take our practice to a deeper level beyond the complications of the outer mind.

கனம் உயிர் அன்று ஐந்தகம் நெ அகம்.

The Vedas not only equate the Self with fire, they also equate the heart, which is the seat of the Self, with fire. The Self is said to exist like a flame the size of a thumb in the heart. This small flame in the heart is the real person, power and presence that allows the body and mind to function. It is like the pilot light in a stove that lights all the other burners on the stove. The light of the Self lights all the other fires of the body, prana, senses and mind. Even the digestive fire can only work with its support.

This flame of the Self sustains us through all our states of waking, dream and deep sleep and through the entire process of birth or death. Even prana or the life-force is but its manifestation or shadow. This flame leaves the body at death and carries the samskaras that propel us on to another birth. Only for those who are fully Self-realized, who have totally merged into their inner fire, are able to escape this process.

This Self in the heart is clearly explained in the *Narayana Sukta* which states:

In the middle of the heart is a great fire (Mahan Agni) that carries all light and looks to every side. It is the first eater and dwells apportioning our food, the undecaying seer.

He gives heat to the entire body from the feet to the head.

In the middle of this fire is the subtle crest of a flame pointed upwards, shining like a streak of lightning from a dark blue rain cloud.

In the middle of the crest of this flame the Paramatman dwells. He is Brahma (Creator), Shiva (Transformer), Vishnu (Preserver), Indra (Ruler), OM and the supreme Lord.

The great fire (Mahan Agni) in the heart is the subtle body (or linga) and the being behind it of lightning-like appearance is the individual soul or Jivatman. At its core is the atomic point of the Supreme Self which is the doorway into the infinite light, the Sun of suns, the God of gods. Indeed we could say that the *hridaya* or heart that Ramana emphasizes is also this flame that dwells there. The heart, Agni and Atman are ultimately three ways of looking at the same supreme truth.

இவ்வாய்வு, அன்பு அளிக்கும் ஆய்வு

Not surprisingly, as the great teacher of Self-inquiry, Ramana himself was regarded as an incarnation of Agni. He was identified with Skanda, the younger son of Shiva and Parvati, who himself is the child of fire or Agni. Skanda is born of Agni and carries his form and his powers. Skanda is also called Kumara, the divine fire-child. This six-day-old child has the power to destroy all the negative forces of time and ignorance symbolized by the demon Taraka. He is also called Guha or the one who dwells in the cavity of the heart. To find him, we must trace our way back to the cavity of the heart, which is to trace our thoughts back to their origin in the I behind the I. This process is explained as early as the *Rig Veda*: I [65-73] in the hymns of the great Rishi Parashara, though in cryptic Vedic mantras.

In the *Vedas*, Agni is called Jatavedas or the knower of all births as he knows the births of all creatures as their indwelling Self. Jatavedas is the Jiva or the individual soul hidden in the body. This Jiva when awakened discovers its unity with the Supreme. Then it becomes Vaishvanara or the universal person, which symbolizes the liberated soul. Jatavedas or the individual fire becomes Vaishvanara, the fire of the universal Self, which is the other main Vedic name of Agni (not to be confused with Vaishvanara as merely the soul of the waking state in later Vedantic thought). Vaishvanara is this divine child who has realized its unity with the Divine Father, Shiva.

Ganapati Muni, Ramana's disciple and spiritual brother, the great mantric seer who knew both the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*, not only lauded Ramana as Skanda, he spoke of the unity of Skanda and Agni, and identified Ramana with Agni. He states in his *Agni-Devata-Tattva-Nirupanam* (the elucidation of the truth of the deity Agni) that "Agni Vaishvanara, who dwells in the

cave of the heart, is indeed Ramana. Ramana is not different from Kumara. Vaishvanara is Sanat Kumara."

This means that Agni, Skanda and Ramana are the same. Skanda as Kumara is also Sanat Kumara or the eternal child. Sanat Kumara is the primal or *Adi Guru* for humanity in Vedic and Upanishadic thought. He is the Guru of all gurus and the inner Guru that we must all eventually contact. Ramana is the incarnation of that supreme Guru within us. This all-seeing flame in the heart is the true Guru of all that took a wonderful outer manifestation in the form of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

As the Guru of the heart, Ramana did not put much emphasis on outer formalities. As the incarnation of the inner fire he showed how all teachings and practices could be consumed like fuel in the great fire of Self-knowledge.

இந்த அறிவு வளர்ச்சிக்கு உதவும் உதவிகள்

Self-inquiry is a lot like cultivating a fire. Our awareness grows by offering our speech, breath and mind into the witnessing Self that is the eternal and inextinguishable flame within us. It is the quality and consistency of our offering that is the main factor in growing this flame, not any outer formulas or formalities. We must maintain our awareness like a fire, keeping it from going out even for an instant by continually offering our mental modifications into it as its fuel.

Indeed we could say that the modifications of the mind are nothing but the smoke coming forth from an improperly burning fire of awareness. When

that inner flame burns clean and consistently then there is only pure light and the mind itself gets merged in its source.

For Self-inquiry to be a living process we must invoke and incarnate that inner flame of knowing in our daily lives. Self-inquiry is not a matter of ordinary thinking or logic. It is not a matter of emotion or feeling either. It is not a matter of just blanking or stopping the mind as it is. Nor is it some esoteric intuition. It is the most fundamental form of knowledge, perception or consciousness that we have. It is cultivating the pure light behind all the glitter and shadow of the mind and senses. The Self is the mind behind the

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mind, the eye behind the eye, the speech behind speech and the prana behind prana as the *Upanishads* so eloquently state.

Behind all of our senses through which we perceive the external world is a more primary internal sense of self-being through which we know that we exist and through which we are one with all existence. This self-sense is more immediate than all the outer senses which are only possible through it. But it is so immediate and given, our very sense of being, that we take it for granted and ignore it. In the maze of sensory information we lose track of who we really are. We get caught in the movements of the body and the mind and forget our true nature that transcends them and for which alone they work.

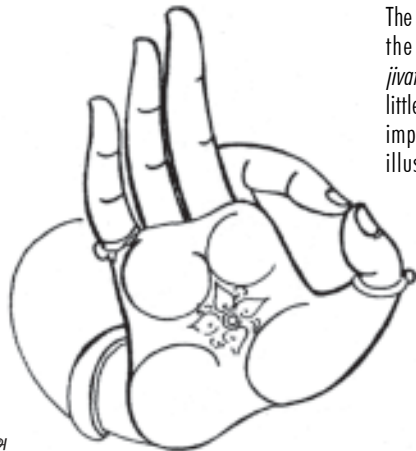
We must remember this very subtle inner fire through which the mind and senses shine and reveal their objects of perception. Cultivating this direct awareness of the Self (*aparoksha anubhava* of Vedanta) is a lot like conducting a fire sacrifice. Behind all of our states of mind, even the most ignorant or confused, like a flame hidden in darkness, the Self shines as the eternal witness of all. What is important is to bring that flame out, like a fire hidden in wood, through the friction of inquiry.

This Self within the heart transcends all the worlds. As the supreme Agni or digestive power, it has the capacity to eat or absorb the entire universe. As the *Taittiriya Upanishad* ends:

I am food. I am food. I am food.

I am the eater of food. I am the eater of food. I am the eater of food.

I consume the entire universe. My light is like the sun!



The thumb represents *Pramatman*, the forefinger stands for the *jivatman* and the middle, ring, and little fingers stand for the three impurities of the body: passion, illusion and activity.

இறைமீ'வாய்க்கி'அ நுகி
நம்பு'அ'வாய்க்கி'அ'வாய்க்கி'அ

HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

by KATYA OSBORNE

I HAD NEVER READ anything about Ramana Maharshi, I had not read much of anything at all. I had hardly ever heard the name. I was not a seeker. I was five years old and I came because my parents decided it was what they wanted to do and at five one doesn't have a voice when it comes to decisions like where to live.

Memory is a curious attribute. Many things are bright and clear throughout the river of life, while others blur and fade or else change emphasis as well as shape and form and seem to evolve into something different. My memories of arriving in India are fractured and mainly unclear, but my memories of arriving in Tiruvannamalai are surprisingly coherent. It was hot, that I can clearly state, and it was also incredibly dusty. Why the dust should have made such an impression on me I now find hard to understand but in my mind's eye there is a soft pall of pale gold dust over everything. It was in the air and on the road. After dark the dust was cool and welcoming to the feet like puffs of talcum powder. Although the place was new and strange, I never associate a feeling of strangeness with Tiruvannamalai. Perhaps because it was such a short time before it became familiar as home. In the way of children my brother and sister and I rapidly learnt the language and made friends with other children. It cannot have been quite as quick as my memory recalls because my brother Adam was barely walking when we arrived and my sister Franica was a babe in arms. Our friends were the gardener's daughter and the children of the Ashram: Sundaram, who is now the president, Ganesh and Mani, as well as their sisters. But all that happened later.

The first time I saw Bhagavan is as clear today as it was at the time, all those many years ago. It must have been the day after we arrived. My father was not with us as he had been interned in a concentration camp in Bangkok where we had lived previously. With us three small children clustered around her, my mother went to the Ashram for the first time to receive Bhagavan's darshan. As the oldest I was in charge of the tray of fruit we were bringing. It had been explained to us that the only acceptable gift to Bhagavan was fruit, which could be shared in the dining hall later. The tray I bore, laden with bananas and oranges, felt huge. My arms were stretched around it and it threatened to wobble free and spill everything onto the ground. It took intense concentration to



keep things from collapsing, but it was my responsibility and I took it seriously. We walked across the open space that was occupied by a few sleeping dogs, some squirrels and a peacock. (The space is now a beautiful hall with a polished granite floor and a shrine at one end where Bhagavan is buried, but was then just bare ground inhabited by various animals waiting their turn to seek Bhagavan's darshan.) Then we entered the cool hall where he sat, known now as the Old Hall but in those days it was the only hall and the main entrance was a door opposite the couch. It is now a window.

We entered and saw Bhagavan straight away sitting on the couch in front of us. There he was.

Seeing him, all the rest of the room and the people faded away. There was such a presence, and yet it didn't feel strange. He seemed luminous and magi-

cal and friendly all at once. I stood there staring at him, not knowing what to do with my burden of fruit. He smiled and pointed to a stool at the side of the couch that was used to receive such offerings. I didn't know that and since there was no guard-rail around him back in those days, I sat myself down on the stool with my back to Bhagavan and smiled happily at all the people in the hall who were smiling back at me. We were the first European children to come there and a definite novelty. I was still holding the tray. Bhagavan laughed and made a remark in Tamil, which we didn't yet understand. It was translated to me. He had said that I was making an offering of myself. All the rest of my life when I have got myself into one sort of mess or another, that remark has given me the courage to go on.

After all, Bhagavan must surely help one who has made an offering of herself.

The years of our childhood were spent running in and out of the hall. Frania learnt to walk there, Adam learnt to run and I learnt whatever it is one learns when playing at Bhagavan's feet, most of it probably by osmosis. It was there that we saw the animals come to visit him. The peacock would come through the door and right up to the couch, then the beautiful tail was spread and it would dance. Bhagavan watched—we all watched—as though it was a formal programme, and when it was over Bhagavan gravely acknowledged the peacock's performance and it left. The squirrels came to the door and glanced around nervously, then there was a dash to the couch and up onto Bhagavan's hand or knee. He sometimes gave them puffed rice from a small tin kept for the purpose. Dogs came and prostrated themselves before the couch and monkeys chattered to him from outside the window. They were frequently chased away but as frequently reappeared. One time someone showed Bhagavan a paragraph in the newspaper where there was an announcement that vans were touring the villages and collecting monkeys for sale abroad for experiments. Bhagavan laughingly said to the king monkey who was clinging onto the bars of the window beside his couch:

"Did you hear that? It isn't safe for monkeys here right now so you better take your tribe away."

When the vans came there wasn't a monkey in sight. Not one in the whole ashram area. Later I heard someone comment that no monkeys had been caught in the whole of Tiruvannamalai.

Then of course there was Lakshmi the cow. She would wait for Bhagavan outside the back door or call for him to come out and then she would snuggle up to him and rub her head against him, or else he would go and visit her in

the cowshed and sit down beside her. They spoke together and it was obvious that she adored him. It was also obvious that she was a very special lady. I think that all the animals considered that he was one of them, albeit in a special way, and come to think of it the humans seemed to think more or less the same thing.

The amazing thing is not that all the animals came to Bhagavan, it is that we all accepted it and took it for granted without being amazed. Of course children believe in magic as a part of everyday life, but even the grown-ups accepted it as completely natural as far as I remember. Adam, Frania and I came to Bhagavan with our toys to show him, with our books and puzzles to share with him and with our secrets to confide in him. He treated us children with the same courtesy and gave us the same attention that he accorded to the adults with their problems. He also laughed with us. With the passage of time, and the realisation that he was the great Sat-Guru, people forget in their reverence that Bhagavan had a great sense of humour and the hall often rang with his laughter.

Our lives revolved around Bhagavan and the Old Hall. We all played on the rocks of Arunachala and made ships or castles out of their shapes, but we gravitated back and until we were severally sent off to school, the hall was the focus of our lives.

Bhagavan sat in one corner with a small revolving bookcase beside him. He kept his favourite works there for easy reference and he often shared something from one of the shelves with someone who asked him for clarification, that is, if he didn't give his usual reply along the lines of: "First find out who is asking the question". He did however occasionally get involved in points of doctrine. I was in the hall when he was explaining about the spiritual heart on the right side of the body. This surprised me as I had *naturally* assumed, as children do, that the heart was on the right side of the body and couldn't comfortably imagine it anywhere else. Why would that be spoken of as something remarkable? I was in the hall when people sometimes came crying with inner pain. A look from him was often all it took to heal them. It was in the hall that I brought my new paper-folding book. I had received it for my birthday and one of the designs just would not work out. I tried it again in front of Bhagavan and of course this time it worked. I knew it would. People would show him their letters, sometimes from loved ones and sometimes with news such as job opportunities. We showed him everything, every part of our everyday lives.

I wrote to my mother from school and asked at the end of the letter to be remembered to Bhagavan. She showed him the letter and he said:

"If Kitty will remember Bhagavan, then Bhagavan will remember Kitty."

Another remark that has given me comfort over the years.

We all, humans and animals came to Bhagavan to show him our triumphs and our troubles and we knew he would deal with it all and understand it all, often, in fact usually, without a word being spoken.

The long part of the hall at Bhagavan's feet was where people sat as a rule, the men on the left and the women on the right with a natural passageway in between.

Some in silent meditation, some with something to say or to ask and waiting for the moment that seemed appropriate, and some just sitting there, luxuriating in Bhagavan's presence. Twice a day, morning and evening, the *pujaris* came and sat up near his couch and chanted the Vedas. First it was a few older men, and then after Chadwick inaugurated the Veda school, there was a leavening of young boys.

Although Bhagavan could be friendly and approachable, there were times, and usually one of them was when the Vedas were being chanted, when he would close his eyes and go away. To see him then was awe-inspiring. He looked exalted. At times like that one could hear a pin drop. No one even wanted to breathe too loud. It is strange to reflect on how many moods and faces Bhagavan could wear and belong to none of them. We children accepted it all without question. Bhagavan was Bhagavan and of course he could do anything and be anyone he chose—well naturally.

With peculiar elasticity, our time in Tiruvannamalai seemed to both pass in a flash and also to encompass our whole lives. It was barely a year from when I entered the hall for the first time till I was packed off to school, a development that seriously interfered with my education which was advancing very well indeed in the Ashram and on the Hill. My mother didn't agree with my arguments, so school it was. Every holiday back I came and Bhagavan was there, just the same as ever, and so we slipped seamlessly into our old lives. The Hill and the hall never changed and, as far as a child's eyes could judge, neither did Bhagavan. We didn't notice that his body was getting older. I wish now that I had spent more time sitting in the hall instead of climbing a tree with my book. Of course I thought that Bhagavan would be there for ever.

Of course he is. ▲

It is strange to reflect
on how many moods
and faces Bhagavan
could wear, and belong
to none of them.
We children accepted it
all without question.

The Real is Unknowable & the Knowable is Unreal

by ROBERT POWELL

ONE OF OUR GREAT difficulties is the power of sense perception in producing various misperceptions. For what we perceive is not at all what *is*. It must be well understood that what *is* is what *is* only and cannot be described; it can only be referred to. But one must be ever mindful of the fact that even such a reference lies still entirely within the field of Ignorance, and such fundamental ignorance of our nature is a prescription for suffering.

Most people think that the basic duality lies within the apparent opposition mind/matter, but therein actually lies no duality at all. Mind depends on matter for its existence and matter in turn depends on mind for its perception. Each has a little of its antipode in it.

The Real cannot be perceived, for it lies beyond the field of perception, or perhaps better: prior to the field of perception. A description can be given only of entities in space and time, but the latter are the product of sensory perception — that is, the body and its physiological processes. Since perception is a function of bodily processes and “body” itself is ultimately a physiological, mental precept, it has no ultimate reality. We are like waves in the ocean looking at other waves, but missing the Ocean in our perception.

Directly connected with this situation is the question of language and the inherent area of confusion. Existing forms of communication are based

on the faulty idea that reality is tangible and communicable. Since ultimate truth is incommunicable by any means, this directly impinges on our means of communication. Thus, when a spiritual master like Sri Ramana Maharshi talks about the Self, he is not referring to any one particular individual; he refers to That which underlies all individuals and all observable and imaginable objects — in other words, the Totality. This Totality cannot be imagined because it lies beyond thought, and is infinitely more than an integration of finite entities.

Most spiritual efforts have as their foundation the manipulation by, and of, the mind, whereas it can be seen that the first requirement is the relinquishing of all efforts, all manipulation in the mental sphere — in fact, its total dismissal — for all that is based on thought and has no more reality than our imagination.

Man thinks he is an island in a world of plurality, in which he can control or manipulate his environment so as to create more security for himself. He is totally unaware that the so-called “individual” is powerless to do anything, because there simply is no entity present to do anything. That “individual” is a product of the imagination. Such relinquishment is in itself something major because it is in the nature of a total cessation. This somehow goes against the grain, our natural state of “doing things,” making efforts to achieve results, which has become one continuous movement of incessant activity. However, what we think we have moved or achieved is merely the progression of a dream and has no reality to it. Thus, what is required only is the waking up from this dream. Such a waking up necessitates the cessation of all activities to reach anywhere and the letting go of all ambitions, even so-called spiritual goals. It means a complete ending of what one is and has always stood for. But first it must be clearly seen that no effort can be of any help in this, just as it is impossible to go into the deep-sleep state by making a tremendous effort to “fall” asleep, as “falling” is an involuntary act. Thus, the linguistic aspect of this fact points to the state of no-effort being of the essence.

The Real cannot be
perceived, for it lies
beyond the field of
perception,
or perhaps better:
prior to the field
of perception.

Realizing the Self as non-divisible in space and time, means there is only the “I” and all others do not exist or are part of me, in the same way that I am part of all others. The Self is a unity in which time and space no longer have any existence. Thus, readers may justifiably say with me: “When I was born, the whole Universe came into view, and with my death the whole of manifestation ceases to exist. Truly, there is only the Self and there are no others.” Birth and death are verbal expressions but are really non-existent; only the Self exists. The closest we are to this state is that of dreamless sleep. To realize this in the wakeful state is knowing the Ground of our being, or Self-Realization, when all differences and separations are eliminated.

This brings us finally to the question of knowledge. Since “knowledge” is always fully within the realm of thought, no amount of thought or speculation can help us in the spiritual quest. Going one step further, even the “quest” itself can be of no help to attain the Self, since such quests always deal with entities, and it is the very entities that are alien to the sphere of no-mind that is the Self. This reminds me of a discussion meeting in which one of the regular participants opined that after many years of taking an interest in the spiritual life, his position was still that of an agnostic. He missed the point, although it was a subtle one. The agnostic, if given the magic key to understanding the universe, would only be too happy with it. His attitude is still one of clinging to one of the dualities, of not-knowing, of denying the existence of the “not-material.” He does not know but subconsciously leaves open the possibility that somewhere resides a rational blueprint explaining everything. Essentially, he feels the support that knowledge — even that of negative knowledge — can give him to carry him through life. The true *advaitin* on the other hand, who has fully seen the total irrelevance of thought and knowledge, knows that so long as the mind is involved in any way — even a negative one — an underlying matrix of contradiction with its special kind of pain will persist and the Self will not reveal itself.

Finally, from a broader point of view, there is the question of action, especially that for the purpose of realization. If all entities are unreal, of the nature of dreams, as are the actions performed with them or on them, what is one to do?

What is one
to do?
The simple truth
is:
You cannot do
anything!

This is actually the wrong sort of question. For the simple truth is: You cannot do anything in this respect, for any such action is done by the “I”, which is unreal in the first place and can therefore never lead to the real. Quite simply, when the reality of the doer is denied and recognized as void, all action on the imagined, unreal level stops automatically and one is purely the Self.

One then has awakened from the dream. In that awakening there is no longer the “me” and others, the past, present and future. All is the Now, and there is only the Now! When I was born, the whole universe and all others were born within me, and there were and are no others separate from me. And when I die, the Universe dies with me, for all are contained within me, the non-dual Self. Seeing the light will immediately and spontaneously eliminate the darkness of the unreal self once and for all. One wakes up from the dream of unreality. But this realization excludes any sort of action, which would entail the re-emergence of the unreal. The Whole can only Be; that is, it embraces everything and everyone. It is purely the Here and Now, and recognizes no separate entities. ▲

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

THE DAKSHINAMURTI STOTRAM is the shortest hymn composed by AdiShankara, yet its subtlety of expression makes it one of his most inspired works. Bhagavan copied these verses in his immaculate handwriting into a small notebook measuring 9.5 cm wide and 8 cm high. The booklet contains two transcriptions. On the left-hand side is the Malayalam and on the right the Tamil (reproduced in the following pages). The reader will notice the odd-numbered Tamil pages. We do not know for whom Bhagavan did this piece of work.

The first verse was actually composed by Vishwanatha Swami in Sanskrit and Bhagavan later translated it into Tamil. Because Bhagavan himself translated the Dakshinamurti Stotra, it is included in his Collected Works. At one point he had intended to write a commentary on the verses but for various reasons did not (see Talks, 7th November 1938).

Once Vishwanatha Swami accompanied Bhagavan around the Hill on the inner path and Bhagavan spent the entire time discussing the stotrams with him. T.K. Sudaresa Iyer also related an incident which occurred during the early days of Ramanasramam. It was Mahashivaratri and Bhagavan lead a discussion on the meaning of the stotrams that went on all night.

The photographs of Bhagavan reproduced on pages 29 to 32 are rare one-of-a-kind vintage prints.

BHAGAVAN'S OWN HANDWRITING

ஸ்

ஐகத்ருசங்கராசாரியரருளிச்செய்த
ஸ்ரீ தக்ஷிணமூர்த்திஸ்தோத்ரம்.

5 -
மங்கலம்.

2. மவுனமா முரையாற் காட்டு
மாப்பிரம வத்து வாலன்
சிவநிலைத் தவாச்சற் சீடர்
செறிகுரு வரன்சிற் கைய
னுவகையோ ருருவன் றன்னு
னுவப்பவன் களிமு கத்த
னவனையாந் தென்பால் மூர்த்தி
யப்பனை யேத்து வோமே.

3 -
குருஸ்துதி.

1. மன்னுமா முனிவரர்
சாந்தி மன்னவே
தென்முக மூர்த்தியாய்த்
திகழ்ந்து மோனமாந்
தன்னிலை திகழ்த்தியித்
துதியிற் றன்மயஞ்
சொன்னவச் சங்கரன்
றுன்னு மென்னுளே.

7 -

3. உலககண் ணாடி யூர்நே
ருறத்தனு ளஞ்ஞா னத்தால்
வெளியினிற் றுயிர்க ளுப்போல்
விளங்கிடக் கண்டு ஞான
நிலையுறு நேரந் தன்னை
யொருவனா யெவனேர் காண்பன்
றலையுறு குருவா மந்த
தக்ஷிண மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 9 -

4. வித்துளே முளேபோன் முன்னம்
 விகற்பமி லிச்ச கம்பின்
 கற்பித மாயா தேய
 காலகர் மத்தாற் பற்பல்
 சித்திரம் விரிப்பன் யாவன்
 சித்தனு மாயி கன்போற்
 சத்தியாற் குருவா மந்த
 தகூழினு மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 13 -

6. பலதுளேக் குடத்துட் டீபப்
 பாய்கதிர் போல்யார் ஞானம்
 விழிமுதற் பொறிவாய்ப் பாய்ந்து
 வெளிசரித் தறிந்தே னென்ன
 விளங்கிடு மெவனைச் சார்ந்து
 விளங்குமீவ் வவனி யாவுஞ்
 சலமறு குருவா மந்த
 தகூழினு மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 11 -

5. எவனொளி யுண்மை யின்மை
 யியைபொரு ளிலங்கு நேரே
 யெவனது நீயா னுயென்
 றிசைத்துணர்த் துவன்சேர்ந் தோரை
 யெவனேநர் காணின் மீண்டு
 மிப்பவக் கடல்வீழ் வில்லை
 தவருறு குருவா மந்த
 தகூழினு மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 15 -

7. உடலுயிர் பொறிகள் புந்தி
 யொன்றுபா முகமாத் தேர்வர்
 மடந்தையர் பால ரந்தர்
 மடையரேய் மூட வாதி
 மடமையால் விளையு மம்மா
 மயக்கமே மாய்க்கும் ஞானத்
 தடையறு குருவா மந்த
 தகூழினு மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 17 -

8. இராகுபற் நிரவி திங்க

னொனவுளன் மாயை மூடப்
 பராவுள மொடுங்கத் தூங்கிப்
 பரவிட வுணருங் காலம்
 புராவுறங் கினனா னென்று
 போதனா மெவன்பு மாணய்ச்
 சராசர குருவா மந்த
 தகூழினா மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 19 -

9. குழவிமுன் னனவு முன்னாக்

கூறுபல் லவத்தை யெல்லாஞ்
 சூழலினுங் கலந்தி ருந்தே
 சொலிக்குமுள் ளகமா நாளுங்
 கழல்விழு வோர்க்கார் தன்னைக்
 காட்டுவன் சிற்கு றிப்பாற்
 றழல்விழிக் குருவா மந்த
 தகூழினா மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 21 -

10. உலகையா சிப்பு மாளோக்
 குறும்பல நனாக்க னாவிற்
 கலங்கியே மாயை யாலே
 காரிய கார ணம்பின்
 றலைவனுந் தாசன் சீடன்
 குருமகன் றந்தை யாதி
 தலமுறு குருவா மந்த
 தகூழினா மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 23 -

11. மண்புன லனல்கால் வான

மதிகதி ரோன்பு மாணு
 மென்றொளிர் சராச ரஞ்சே
 ரிதுவெவ எனட்டு மூர்த்த
 மெண்ணுவார்க் கிறைநி றைந்தோ
 னெவனினை னியஞ்சற் றின்றாந்
 தண்ணருட் குருவா மந்த
 தகூழினா மூர்த்தி போற்றி.

- 25 -

12. சருவமுந் தானு நன்றாய்ச்
சாற்றுமித் தோத்தி ரத்தின்
சிரவணந் தன்னு லர்த்த
சின்தனந் தியானங் காணம்
புரிவதா லெல்லாந் தானும்
பூதிசே ரீசன் றன்மை
மருவடு மற்று மெட்டா
மடிவறு செவ்வந் தானே.

ஸ்ரீ
தக்ஷிணாமூர்த்திஸ்தோத்ரம்
முந்நிற்று.



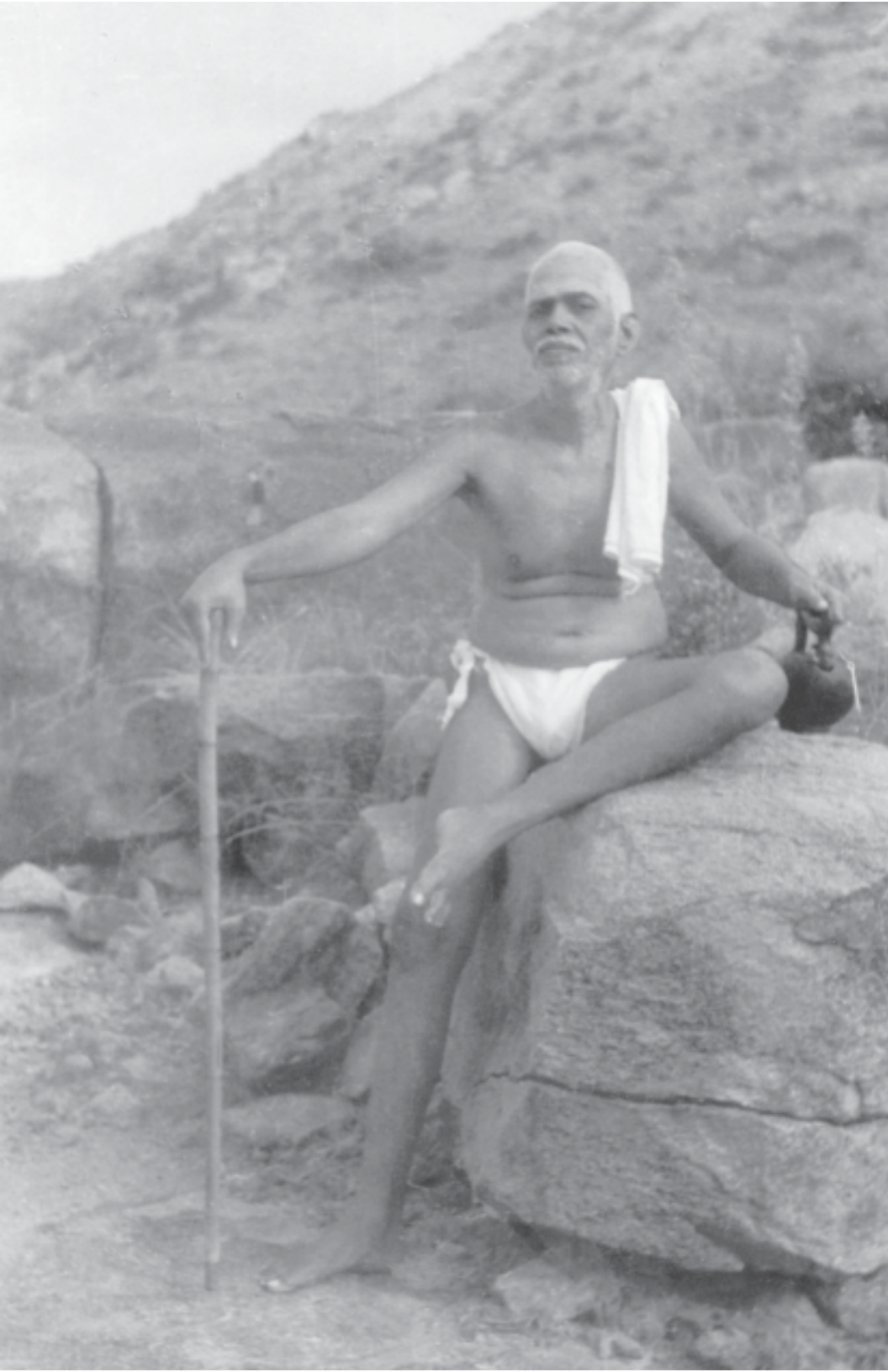
VINTAGE PHOTOS

WHILE we are extremely fortunate that part of the material legacy of Sri Ramana's embodiment is hundreds of photographs of Bhagavan's gracious form, most devotees will be familiar with perhaps just a few dozen. A relative handful of long-term devotees will have seen most of the photos over the years in the wide and voluminous range of Ashram publications.

However, there are a few lovely images which have never before been published, to the best of our knowledge, perhaps because they did not exhibit the qualities required for the purposes then to hand. As in the recent issues of this journal, we are happy to continue reproducing these unique images for our readers, each representing a timeless and ungraspable moment in the life of the Maharshi.



Bhagavan and his attendant Krishnaswami share an informal moment on the Hill.



FROM OUR ARCHIVES

“Go, Without Fear”

Reproduced below is a hitherto unpublished page dated 1929 from B.V. Narasimha Swami's manuscript notes which formed the basis of his definitive biography of Bhagavan: Self Realisation: Life and Teachings of Ramana Maharshi first published in 1931.

KAVERIPATNAM Postmaster Narayansamier waits on Maharshi for days and before parting mentions his condition. “I am possessed by sudden fears. What am I to do?”

M: What fears?

N: E.g. I am afraid I will get disease?

M: Who gets disease? Do you get it?

N: Of course it is the body, it is my body gets it.

M: If you analyse what you are, you see that disease can not affect you?

N: I fear death, sometimes.

M: What are you? Do you die?
Can you die?

N: I am Atma & the Atma is immortal.

M: Think of that. Realise that.

N: I try; but that does not remain
in the mind long.

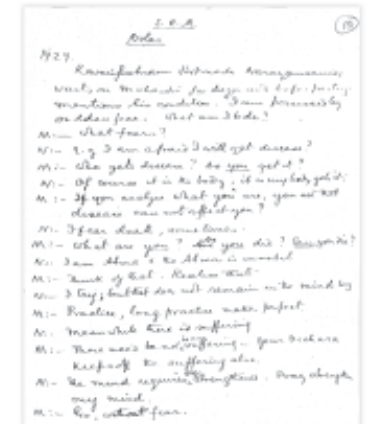
M: Practice, long practice makes perfect.

N: Meanwhile there is suffering.

M: There need not be any suffering—your vichara keeps off the suffering also.

N: The mind requires to be strengthened. Pray strengthen my mind.

M: Go, without fear.



Musings of an Ignorant Man in Search of Truth

by N. R. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

Mere intellectual understanding of Truth does not lead me anywhere. Success is possible only when God showers His blessings upon me.

WHO AM I? I cannot see my own face. I can at best see only an image of my face in a mirror. How much more difficult it is to know who I am? I have a name and a form. I was not born with a name. My parents gave me one for easy identification. But “I” was born in me even before a name was given to me. I was not born with my present form. My form has been constantly changing every day, nay every moment, ever since I was born. I myself am able to watch the changes in my form from time to time. The “I” in me, however, seems to continue to exist without being affected by my growing age marked by wrinkles and grey hair. Even if my body were to be completely distorted beyond recognition due to a sudden accident, I shall continue to be what I am, and “I” will not change. I am not this body; I am something else operating from this body. Who am I?

Am I the mind? When my mind thinks of some sinful act, I am able to realise immediately that my mind is engaged in bad thought, and I am also able to tell my mind to stop the thought. My mind obeys my command. I am fully aware that my mind and sense organs are not under my control for most of the time, and that my mind takes fancy in jumping from one thought to another, but I am able to keep these under check (although for short periods) when I exercise my Will. It is clear from this that I possess a mind and sense organs, but I am not any of these.

Am I the intellect? Based on my memories of past experiences, I am able to take decisions. My mind is always attracted to sense objects and, as a consequence, I seem to experience pain and pleasure. It is my intellect that helps me to divert my mind from its urge for sense experiences. Sometimes, a strange phenomenon called “intuition” flashes through my mind to guide me to take right decisions. In the past, several times, I was struggling hard to solve a problem and could not find the right solution for days on end. Then, suddenly in my deep sleep (when my mind was resting), a particular solution flashed in my mind by way of intuition, and when I woke up and applied this solution, I invariably succeeded in solving the vexed problem. I have no control on my intuitions nor do I know how these were caused and who caused them. Perhaps, intuition is nothing but my intellect suddenly illuminated by the floodlight of some superior power within myself when my mind is calm and quiet. I find that whenever my mind is agitated, my intellect fails me. I feel that my intellect is closer to me than my mind because it seems to operate from within me, while my mind is engaged with the sense world outside of me. I am aware that I have intellect, but I cannot say that I am intellect itself.

If I am not my body, my mind, my intellect or the intuition, am I the life principle in my body that keeps me alive? I find from what I see in the outside world that so long as there is life in the individual, his body, mind, sense organs and intellect function, but the moment life deserts his body, these also stop functioning. Both the secular and spiritual sciences have discovered that the human body is made up of the five elements of the nature. It is the vital air that gives me life. Working through its five aspects (Prana, Apana, Vyana, Samana and Udana) it makes all parts of my body function in a synchronised and precise fashion so that a balance of the elements is always maintained in the body. When this balance is disturbed, my life suffers and my body suffers from illness. The knowledge that my body-mind complex functions in spite of myself, leaves me with no alternative but to conclude that my life exists because of the vital force in my body acting as a commander.

When I am in deep sleep, there is nescience regarding the body, sense organs and mind, but I have continued to exist throughout without being aware of anything. I cannot say that this life principle in me is the real “I” because I am myself aware of its existence in my body and I can watch it.

The Upanishads say that the consciousness or awareness in me is itself my real Self and that it exists in me always, even during my deep sleep, and in sleep it is aware of something which is “nothingness”. Nothingness is a

state that exists when the mind is totally resting, free from all thoughts. The consciousness and the life principle exist in unison. Consciousness projects the vital life force in all living bodies. It is the consciousness that keeps the “I” awareness in me. The scriptures call this consciousness in me as Atman and also declare that Atman is nothing other than Brahman. It is the same consciousness that exists in all living beings. That is why the two instincts of self-preservation and self-multiplication (reproduction) are common to all living species.

It is said that Brahman has projected the five elements and the universe from itself — a higher Prakriti (subtle matter, energy) reflected in the form of the life principle together with three moods (*gunas*) viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the mind and the intellect, and a lower Prakriti (matter) reflected as the gross body. According to scriptures, Brahman is Nirguna (has no qualities) and Nirakara (has no form) in its original inactive form, but when He is active (by His own power of Maya) projecting the three *gunas*, He becomes Saguna Brahman or otherwise called Ishwara. He is the Almighty God, the Lord of the Universe who, we all believe, answers our legitimate prayers. He is the one who bestows the fruits of our actions depending upon our eligibility. He is full of compassion and loves all his creation with no bias or partiality. The vital force called life which exists in all living beings is this Saguna Brahman. It is the life force that activates my body, breath, sense organs, mind and intellect.

When I am in deep sleep, my I consciousness is under the total influence of *tamo guna* and my mind is resting, and therefore I am aware of neither my real Self nor the outside world. When *rajo guna* shows up in a small dose while I am still in the clutches of *tamo guna*, my mind begins to throw up thoughts, and I then experience dreams. I enter into waking state as *rajo guna* becomes dominant while the other two *gunas* play a less active role, thereby opening myself to worldly experiences. In my waking state, sometimes I try to keep *tamas* and *rajo guna* at bay and cultivate *sattva* to play the main role. Under the influence of *sattva guna*, I seem to find peace within myself and enjoy happiness. During meditation this is what I try to achieve — to be under the influence of *sattva* while distancing myself from

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tamas and *rajas*. But these two latter *gunas* try hard to show up now and then, even during meditation. Modern science calls the smallest particle of matter an “atom” (does not this word sound similar to “Atman”?) and found that it is made up of three components: electron, neutron and proton, which have properties of inertia, energy and matter. I believe that the Atman of the Vedic exposition and the atom of modern science have something in common. The scriptures say that man and the universe are not different; man is the microcosmic form of the macrocosmic universe consisting of both higher and lower *prakritis*. God is in me and I am in God.

The life principle in me has caused the first thought of I in me, and all other thoughts came only later. This I-consciousness in me is very strong. It is my ego or *jiva* or my smaller self. In addition to the three *gunas* and my I consciousness, I am also carrying loads of impressions left by my past thoughts and actions, and all these together have caused a veil of ‘ignorance’ in me — ignorance of Atman who is the real I in me and whose nature is pure existence, knowledge (awareness) and bliss (Sachidananda). If I have to discard my ignorance and realise my true nature, I must completely ward off the *tamo* and *rajo gunas*, reach *suddha* (pure) *sattva* state, and thereafter even transcend *sattva* state. Consciousness is called pure existence (Sat) because it is ever present, everywhere. It is all-pervasive. It is within me and I am within it. Again, consciousness is said to be of the nature of peace and pure bliss (*ananda*). The ordinary happiness which I experience in my waking state has no comparison to this Bliss. This bliss is beyond the experience of my senses and mind. I enjoy this bliss in the samadhi state in which all *gunas* are transcended. Samadhi is the fourth state after deep sleep, dream and waking states and it is called *turiya* state. In this *turiya* state, I transcend my sense organs, body consciousness, mind and intellect, I-consciousness, ignorance, etc., and become one with Brahman.

Vedic seers of yore have said that the sensory world is the cause of misery. When the individual looks inward and identifies himself with Atman residing in him, he experiences the bliss of consciousness as his mind is then free of all thoughts and hence free from tension. But when he is looking outward and identifies himself with his mind and body, he cannot experience the same bliss. This is because the desire-laden mind always jumps from one thought to another, becoming agitated in the process, which prevents the individual from enjoying the bliss that is already within him. This turbulent state causes unhappiness. When the disturbance is more intense (for example, when his desire to acquire something is not fulfilled or there is fear of losing something which he already possesses), the individual expe-

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riences misery. But now and then, when some desires are fulfilled, the restlessness in the mind calms down momentarily, and the mind is then relatively free from all thoughts; in such moments of temporary vacuum in the mind, a ray of the bliss of Atman is reflected in the mind and the individual experiences happiness.

The logical conclusions of the great rishis about my real Self theoretically satisfy my mind. But this mere intellectual understanding of Truth does not lead me anywhere. It may make me a scholar but it cannot elevate me from my animal-man

status to a higher state where divinity can be experienced by me and I can also help others to taste this divinity. It is impossible for me to really know beyond these conditionalities. According to the scriptures, it is possible to realise the Self as the all-pervasive Brahman, who exists in all creatures, only through hard *sadhana*. Intellectual understanding of Brahman has to be translated into practice by living every moment of life in this Truth. Not only this: in spite of devoted and hard practice, success cannot be taken for granted. Success is possible only when God showers His blessings upon me. The experience of Self-realisation being beyond the sense organs and mind, it is impossible for the realised soul to describe his experience to others through these media. Such an experience may be shared with others at best through silence. And this is exactly what Bhagavan Sri Ramana did.

Jagadguru Shankara's exposition of non-dualistic Vedanta declares that Brahman alone is true and the universe is false (*Brahma Satyam Jagatmithyam*). Dualists may not agree. Very often people ask the question: "How can the universe be false when we are able to experience this world so clearly in its tangible form daily?" Jnanis did not mean that the world was false in the same way an ignorant man thinks. The world does exist for the sense organs. What the Jnani says is that our perception about the reality of the world is wrong (or false). For a Jnani, the entire universe is Brahman. Brahman alone is true because Brahman is immortal, eternal and changeless, whereas the world is false in the sense that it is perishable and neither eternal or changeless. Even though the changeless Brahman is the substratum of the whole universe, one does not see this substratum but one

thinks that what is apparently seen is true. The universe is real to an ignorant man, but it is unreal from the point of view of a Jnani or a spiritual seeker for whom the entire universe is Brahman. But why worry about the true or false nature of the universe? All agree that Brahman is true. The all-pervasive Brahman is beyond my mind and intellect. He is an ocean of bliss. My goal should be to realise Him and also see Him in all my fellow living beings. Becoming one with Brahman alone will release me from bondage. May God bestow His blessings on all those who are in search of Truth with success in their efforts. ▲

BHAGAVAN'S HERBAL REMEDIES

சுவைசூசை அநாஜி

Ghee	— 5 parts (substitute butter or milk if preferred)
Cummin powder	— 5 parts
Sugar	— 5 parts
Ginger	— 1 part

Grind the ginger well and mix all the ingredients. Heat the mixture. Mix the juice of seven lemons, heat further until sufficiently hot. Consume one teaspoon of this twice a day. This recipe cures indigestion and excess bile caused by the dysfunction of the liver.

சுவைசூசை இலையுண்டு குளர்ச்சி சுவை சூசை அநாஜி

- Take juice of Tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*) leaf and mix a little pepper powder and ghee (substitute butter or milk if preferred) in it. Regular intake of this liquid will cure rheumatism.
- Take garlic and jaggery (unrefined brown-sugar) and grind them, mix with sesame-oil and make a good paste of these. Regular intake of this paste will cure rheumatism.

[Source: Dr. Manikkam. Western body-types should take a quarter of the indicated dosage. For more on Bhagavan's herbal remedies, please go to www.ramana-maharshi.org and click on the "Bhagavan's Medicinal Remedies" link.] ▲

The Nature of the State of Pure Being

by SADHU NATANANANDA

SADHU NATANANANDA was a Tamil schoolmaster and a distinguished scholar when he came to Bhagavan for the first time in 1918. When he begged for grace and wisdom at this first meeting, Bhagavan replied:

“Is it the body in front of me that desires to obtain my grace? Or is it the awareness within it? If it is the awareness, is it not now looking upon itself as the body and making this request? If so, let the awareness first of all know its real nature. It will then automatically know God and my grace. The truth of this can be realised even here and now.”

In the 1920s Sadhu Natanananda compiled Spiritual Instructions, a work that now appears in Bhagavan’s Collected Works. Bhagavan also entrusted him with the editing of Self Enquiry and Guru Vachaka Kovai. In the 1950s, after Bhagavan’s mahasamadhi, Sadhu Natanananda wrote Sri Ramana Darsanam, a Tamil book that records and comments on many incidents that he witnessed in Bhagavan’s presence.

The Ashram has recently brought out an English edition of this most important work that also contains, in addition to the full text of Sri Ramana Darsanam, two long and previously unpublished poems, only recently discovered in the Ashram’s archives, in which Sadhu Natanananda summarises Bhagavan’s teachings and describes the transforming effect that Bhagavan’s grace had on him. The following passages are extracts from this new book:

கூறா பிழைக்கிற நமன கூறா குறையும் நமன க்க்கிற ஆழலுகிற

Unlike other teachers of *jnana*, Bhagavan neither followed any of the traditional practices such as giving *diksha*, recognising the guru-disciple relationship or training disciples in rules and regulations, nor did he give *upadesa* in the conventional fashion. When he spoke, he simply cleared the doubts of seekers, giving advice that corresponded to their spiritual maturity.

Bhagavan was always absorbed in the Self. Hence, just as the presence of light is sufficient for the removal of darkness, his *darshan* was often sufficient for the removal of ignorance.

This illustrates Thayumanavar’s conclusion: ‘Those who speak will not get collected in *nishtha* [Self-abidance]; those who are firmly established in *nishtha* will not teach [by verbal instructions].’

ஏம ஆழ குறையிடா என் அழை நினைவுகூர் கீழ என்னைப்பின் ஏழைமுருமண அரு அ எக்கீக்

Despite not following any of the practices and displays prevalent in the various religious establishments that function in the names of *Sadgurus* of yore, Sri Ramana was always surrounded by a great many devotees. However, in the early days, pseudo-vedantins used to debate among themselves about Bhagavan:

‘What instruction does Sri Ramana give, and to whom? Does he at least prescribe rules and regulations for his disciples? If only he had approached some other Guru and learned something, at least a few of the characteristics of a teacher would be present in him. While a student, still at school, he became a victim of some delusion. Suddenly he left home and came to Arunachala, shaved his head and started wearing a loincloth. He spent many years in silence. That is all.

‘Does he have the proper qualification of hearing, reflection etc.? Only one who has become a *Brahma-nishtha* [one who is firmly established in *Brahman*] through hearing, reflection, etc. can be a *Sadguru*. If his qualifications are so poor, what can one say about all the fools who have gathered around him? That is why all the devotees of Sri Ramana are seen to be without any discipline!’

Such used to be the talk among the pseudo-vedantins.

Others complained, ‘He is spending all his time just observing mere silence, without knowing anything. At least let me teach him something and put him on the right path.’

With such benevolent ideas some came to Sri Ramana to give him *upadesa* but finally took him as their *Sadguru*. Such was their good fortune. Some with

depraved minds came with the idea that they would become famous by mesmerising him through their initiation tricks, but they had to return disappointed.

It is ignorance, taking the form of the I-am-the-body feeling, that makes one regard oneself as a guru. As the word 'guru' connotes the removal of ignorance, how can he who has not got rid of his own ignorance become the *Sadguru* who removes others' ignorance? A firm *jnani* is alone fit to be adored as a Guru. Since such a one has no ego, he perceives only the Self and is not aware of superficial differences.

According to *Brahma Gita*, 'A *jnani* is none other than God. To stay where he stays is liberation.'

Those who regard someone who is firmly established in *jnana*, a *jivanmukta*, as their Guru are, following the wasp-grub argument, certain to be blessed by him through the power of their meditation [a wasp larva, terrified of being stung by a wasp, is always thinking of it, eventually becoming a wasp]. This is the method of showering grace that was demonstrated by Lord Dakshinamurti, the primal Guru who truly personified non-dual knowledge in the form of supreme silence.

In order to revive this blemishless path to the ultimate state, Sri Ramana incarnated as the gracious Guru. How can the marks imagined by those 'who act as gurus to get worship from others' be appropriate in Sri Ramana?

Right from the beginning Bhagavan remained without any sense of doership. He never used to prescribe disciplines for anyone. His nature was to instruct by following himself all the disciplines of conduct enjoined upon spiritual aspirants. However, he never permitted excesses by those who relied entirely on him, for he used to correct them in private with kind words. There were some who complained that Bhagavan was not openly censuring the deficiencies in their conduct.

Coming to realise the distress of one such soul, Bhagavan revealed his views on the matter through the following words of grace: 'Who is to correct whom? Is it not the Lord alone who has the authority to correct everyone? All that we can do is correct ourselves. That itself is correcting others.'

Although Bhagavan felt that all should follow the path of righteousness, he never had any sense of doership with regard to correcting others. The sages such as Buddha, Sankara and Ramakrishna in their essential nature shone as *Brahman*. However, their biographies say that for the sake of devotees they took upon themselves the pure sense of doership to some extent. But right up to the end Bhagavan shone as the transcendental supreme without even that pure form of ego.

There were many proud ones who proclaimed themselves to be a 'Shiva yogi' or a 'supreme *jnani*'. But Sri Ramana showed himself to be one who

never made such tall claims. In his later days, however, he was surrounded by thousands of *Brahma-nishtas* and appeared as Dakshinamurti himself. The subtle reasons behind this are investigated next.

ஆம இ அக்கும ஏஉ ஐகு அநஓம்மீடுகணகீஉஉ, கூற எக்கீக் ஐகு எந்ந

God and the *jnani* are identical. To know oneself as pure consciousness distinct from the body is to know God. God consciousness is not different from one's real nature, pure consciousness. Knowing God is only being the Self. The supreme spirit [*Parabrahman*] and the *jnani* who has the firm experience of the Self are identical because of the experience of adjunct-free being-consciousness.

Bhagavan, who graciously gave this explanation of the truth of the *Sadguru*, was himself a standing testimony to this truth. Just as the sun, having the form fire, generates its fire-nature in the sun-stone on which its rays fall, Sri Ramana, having the form of consciousness-light, generated consciousness of the Self in the hearts of those on whom his divine look fell. This experience of the Self is automatically obtained in the presence of the *jnani* who unceasingly abides in the Self.

கூற எகீ அகயீக்கு நமன கூற எக்கீக் கு கீகீ குமீடு

Just as air, which is blemishless in its nature, has foul or good odour by virtue of what it associates with, the mind, which is essentially *sattvic* in its real nature, acquires good or evil qualities because of association with them. It is said by the sages that the divine trait of *sattva* is the enduring quality of the mind, whereas the demonic traits of *rajas* and *tamas* are unnatural and therefore can be changed. It is also said that association with the wise is the means for effecting this transformation. Realising the truth of the above from their experience, some devotees used to tell Bhagavan that the tranquillity of mood experienced effortlessly in his presence could not be obtained elsewhere even by great effort. They would pray to him to grant the same peace experienced in his presence elsewhere as well.

Bhagavan, as though approving their prayer, would say:

'Yes, yes. Just as the mother of pearl converts the raindrop it receives into pearl, the mature ones are redeemed by taking the divine look of the *Sadguru* as his grace. But the immature ones, despite staying in the Guru's presence for a long time, do not realise anything. They are like a donkey that carries precious camphor [without being aware of its value].

'There is no partiality in the grace of the Guru. The sunlight that shines uniformly everywhere is reflected only by subtle and pure substances such

as mirrors and water, and not by other materials. Similarly, although the grace of the Guru is bestowed equally on all, those with impure minds, which have restless and impure thoughts, do not obtain peace from it. Yet, just as they do in the Guru's presence, if they also practise elsewhere in a state of non-association with external objects, in due course they can attain unceasing tranquillity of mind.'

In this way he used to encourage devotees to practise their *sadhana*. Those who have particular faith in the power of the presence of Bhagavan can be seen to practise meditation in his *samadhi* shrine even today.

நிஅபிகா கிழைநீ விநிழைநீ அபிக் குகலுஃ இந்நிபிடு இறங்குநீ குருகு

The lamp inside a pot fails to illuminate anything because of the limitations of the pot. Similarly, the Supreme Self appears to have lost its Self-consciousness because of the body limitation. However, just as the sun's presence causes the lotus bud to blossom, the presence of the *Sadguru* cuts the knot connecting the body and the Self. The same Supreme Self, when it is externalised, becomes the mind. When it is aware of itself, it remains as awareness. Therefore, the *jnani* and the ignorant in their nature are like ruby and crystal respectively. Although crystal is lustrous, it takes on the colours of the objects surrounding it. In the same way, the ignorant one, who in truth is awareness, becomes a *jiva* through taking on or absorbing the I-am-the-body idea. The ruby, even in the presence of objects, not only retains its own natural lustre, it also transforms the colour of nearby objects to its own colour. Following this analogy, the *jnani* not only never loses consciousness of the Self, he also turns those who approach him into himself.

The same Self-consciousness appears, through movement, as mind and as consciousness when it is still.

நிநாநிகுடி அபிகுநிடு இஅகலுநீநீ நிழைநீ எநிஅஇட ஐகு ஃ ஓநிநிழைநீ நிழைநீ கூற. எந்நிக்

The mind is always operating through the senses. The *vasanas*, continually moving towards sense objects, make the mind resemble a lamp flickering in the wind. If it is desireless, the same mind will become motionless, like a lamp in still air. Living with the Guru is the best means for accomplishing this. However, living with the Guru is not, as some people think, the association of one body with another. The *Sadguru* is God in human form, but if the aspirant regards the Guru as being a form, in the same way that he takes himself to be a body, his own I-am-the-body idea will not cease. So long as this root problem does not cease, the devotee's real nature will not manifest, bondage will not end, and liberation will not be obtained. The aspirant should

therefore practise worshipping the *Sadguru* as the unconditioned supreme *Brahman*. Through this practice he will in due course realise that his real nature is not different from the true nature of the *Sadguru*. This realisation will remove the I-am-the-body idea and the devotee will attain *jivanmukti*.

In essence, the aspirant should take consciousness of the Self — which shines within him just as it shines within the *Sadguru* — as his gracious Guru, and abide, through Self-attention, in its presence. This is the true meaning of living with the Guru. ▲

DEAR READER

The Mountain Path welcomes feedback from readers and devotees. Letters selected for publication may be edited for clarity and space.

“The Last Word” is a new feature expressing personal views, anecdotes or experiences of the writer and should be about 400 words.

We are especially keen on hearing from those devotees who had the good fortune to see Bhagavan while he was in the physical form. Any information or impressions, be it just a sentence or a paragraph, is precious.

Devotees who may have rare photographs, manuscripts or memorabilia are requested to contact the Ashram. Copies can be made and the originals returned to the owner. Any item that may otherwise be lost or destroyed will, if appropriate, be preserved for posterity by the Ashram.

Everyone has a story and we invite readers to share their account of how they came to Bhagavan. Even if you think that you can't write, we'll help you. Thank you!

email: m_path@ramana-maharshi.org

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A Dream Come True

by T. V. RAMAMURTHY

After many centuries, the kumbhabhishekam of the Atulyanatheswar Temple at Arakandanallur was performed, thanks to Japanese devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

EVERY TWELVE YEARS a kumbhabhishekam is performed for every temple. This is a re-consecration and renews the sanctity of the presiding deities. On rare occasions, usually about every fifty years, one is lucky enough to be there for a mahakumbhabhishekam. In the case of the Atulyanatheswar Temple near Tirukoilur there is no record when the last major ceremony occurred, so the event was all the more unique. Some local residents claimed from folk memory that there was a three hundred year lapse but we really have no way of knowing. This imponderable element adds to the temple's mystery. The rituals started on 3rd February and went on until the climactic 6th. Those were four days of powerful spiritual regeneration.

Ostensibly this all came about by accident, the sort of serendipitous accident that Bhagavan specialises in with such a light, sure touch that one is never sure where exactly his influence is having effect.

About a year ago a taxi was going on a neighbouring temple tour and as there was a spare seat available a Japanese devotee, Ms. Shunya, took it at the last moment. They travelled to Tirukoilur, which is about 20 miles away, to the first stop on their tour which was the Atulyanatheswar Temple. When they arrived the front gate was locked and there was a derelict air about the place. At last a key was unearthed from somewhere and they could enter the abandoned courtyard. The temple itself is one of the largest of its kind and the idols (*murtis*) are very beautiful, particularly the Devi (goddess) who seems

to dance in the air. In spite of this it was disclosed to the visitors that pujas were not performed regularly due to lack of funds.

Ms. Shunya felt that there was a special atmosphere in this ancient temple and its importance became clear when she stood in the outer courtyard and saw Arunachala in the distance. This was the temple at which Bhagavan had paused on his historic journey to Tiruvannamalai all those many years ago. This may have been the place where he too had his first darshan of the Mountain. This special temple and its precincts were now an abandoned ruin.

Ms. Shunya shared her concern with a fellow Japanese devotee, Professor Yanagida, who returned to Japan a short while later. There he had a powerful dream indicating the significance of the temple and underlining its decayed state. Bhagavan also appeared in the dream. Both these concerned people decided at once that something should be done to bring this forsaken place back to life. They collected funds from the Nippon Ramana Kendra. But before any work was started, money was made available for pujas to be resumed on a regular basis.

The renovations were finished in less than a year, which is astonishing considering the amount of work involved. Sri Ganapati Sthapati observed that the temple was laid out against all rules but that it had such a powerful 'divinity' that nothing should be changed. The ashram builder Sri Anjaneyalu executed the works, assisted by Sri T.V. Chandramouli, under the direction of Sri Doraiswami Sthapati.

Kumbhabhishekams are conducted to preserve the divine presence within a temple, or to recover the forgotten divinity in the case of temple restoration after a long period of neglect. The word kumbhabhishekam means to pour or anoint using pots containing sanctified water.

The temple was known in ancient days for its association with some great Tamil saints and sages who had come to worship at this holy place and praised it with devotional hymns. The renowned seventh century child-saint Jnana Sambandha dedicated eleven verses of his *Thevaram* to the presiding deity, Sri Atulyanatheswara Swami which means "The Incomparable Lord." The Shakti or consort, is Saundaraya Kanakambika, which means the "Mother with the golden hue."

When Bhagavan rested there on his journey to Tiruvannamalai he saw a jyoti, a sacred light in the shrine as did Jnana Sambandha twelve centuries earlier. We cannot know how many people in the intervening years were struck by the special atmosphere of the place, certainly enough to keep its special air of sanctity alive and tangible.

The Arayani Nallur temple complex is situated on a huge rock in the middle of the Dakshinapinakini river. Unusually, it faces west towards Arunachala. It is believed to be 2,000 years old and altogether occupies an area of seven and a half acres.

It was constructed in stone by the Pallava kings and was later developed by the Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagar kings. In the 15th century three Nayaks, or local chieftains, constructed the large seven-storey gopuram. It seems strange that a temple with so much interest shown in it by such a variety of people across so many centuries should have again lapsed into dereliction.

The actual restoration began with endowments from various local religious establishments but the work was slow and only modest repairs were accomplished. Then the Nippon Ramana Kendra, at the instigation of Ms. Shunya Shakiyama, Dr. Tadashi Yanagida and others provided Rs. 20 lakhs. Local religious institutions such as the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham and the Coimbatore Kaumara Mutt along with several devotees provided another Rs. 6 lakhs. There is now a fund for daily pujas to honour Bhagavan's visit to the temple.

The mahakumbhabhishekam began with the the Ganapati and Navagraha *Homas* (oblations to the gods with mantras and the pouring of ghee into the sacred fire) on February 3rd, followed by the preliminary rituals for the Yagashala (the sacrificial rites) and installation of the sacred pots, *raksha-bandhana*. The Yagasala preparations were completed and the Kala pujas were conducted over the next two days. On the morning of the 6th the final Kala pujas were performed and the *ghatams* (pots) were ceremoniously carried to their respective copper pinnacles on top of the temple towers and gopuram. There was a special excitement in the ceremonies and the devotees were filled with expectancy as the events unfolded. Wherever one turned you could see Ramana bhaktas among the happy crowd.

At the penultimate moment H.H. Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram arrived and blessed the occasion with his presence. He climbed up the rough bamboo ladder to the vimanam of the main sanctum for the grand finale of the four-day rituals. The culmination occurred at 9:15 a.m. when the pots of sanctified water were simultaneously poured over the respective kalasams on top of each of the principal vimanams and gopurams with great fanfare. The air was rent with the sound of conches and full-throated cheers. It was a joyous moment.

When we left we knew the temple had come back to life. There was a lightness in our hearts at being a witness to this exceptional ceremony.

Afterwards at a special puja conducted at the Gnanananda Tapovanam His Holiness Sri Vijayendra Saraswati of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham personally gave *prasadam* to all the Japanese devotees. The Tapovan kindly gave lunch to the Ramana bhaktas. ▲



The main gopuram and subsidiary vimanams of the Atulyanatheswar Temple at Arakandanallur during the Kumbhabhishekam on February 6, viewed from atop the vimanam above the main shrine.

BOOK REVIEWS

அறிவு அறியும் பரிபுடைய பரீட்சைக்கீழ் ஒரு ஏழாய்வுப் பரிந்துரை... 1999. Pub: Motilal Banarsidas. <mlbd@vsnl.com>, pp278, Rs. 295

THIS BOOK gives the readers a rare insight into the common focus of all natural health approaches. It presents a comprehensive framework for understanding how nature's intelligence emerges and how it can be harnessed for greater health and well-being.

Maharshi has cast the broad spectrum of Vedic literature into a systematic and comprehensive understanding which brings Vedic wisdom into the reach of everyone. All parts of Vedic knowledge contain valuable insights into enhancing all facets of human life.

Disease is viewed as the result of a breakdown in the delicate balance of the intelligence that rules the functioning of the body. The breakdown results from the disconnection of intelligence from its source in wholeness. The concept of wholeness is derived from Vedic tradition, paralleling modern physic's discovery of the unified force of reality beyond the sub-atomic level.

All aspects of individual life consciousness, physiology, behaviour and environment are taken into account. It aims to "avert the danger that has not arisen" instead of crisis management. Truly it is a multi-dimensional system of health-care.

It approaches health from the interface of consciousness, mind and body. Also it contains a large number of techniques to good health, which are on the level of physiology, behaviour and environment.

The author deserves praise for delivering such a good book. Readers will be transformed into a new and fresh outlook after going through the pages.

—T.N. Pranatharthi Haran

ஒரு சமயக் கருத்துப்போக்கு: அறிவுத்தொண்டம், எண்ணெய்தொண்டம், கிணற்றுக்கொண்டம் by Ram Swarup. 2000. Pub: Voice of India, New Delhi 110002. pp.278, Rs. 300

YOGA AND meditation are no longer confined to Hindu philosophy and practice but have gained world-wide interest. Yet the popular interest in yoga and meditation does not help one to evolve spiritually or develop deep spiritual insight. The author points out that Bhakti and Jnana are the two sides of a coin and both paths lead to the same goal.

David Frawley in his excellent foreword clearly points out the need for a new class of intellectuals represented by Ram Swarup —"a remarkable combination of sharp intellectual clarity under deep spiritual insight and sensibility." Such an approach transcends logic and reason, and is informed by pure intelligence.

The book is divided into seven independent sections. The section 3 on Bhakti Yoga, and chapter 3 of Section 5, One God of Theology, and chapter 7 of Section 2 on Prajna are some of the best chapters in the book. Discussing Bhakti Yoga, Ram Swarup puts out the pitfalls the sadhaka faces in the path and the negative features of false devotion. In the chapter on

Prajna he describes the experience of divinity at two different levels: that of purified manas and at the level of buddhi. "Manas particularises, Buddhi generalizes. In the movement from Manas to Buddhi, spirituality rises from a spiritual experience to a spiritual truth." He explains what is meant by buddhi and why sages have spoken against buddhi. He puts it finely, "Sraddha and Buddhi in their deeper meanings are in happy accord and mutually fulfilling; in their lower meanings, they know no harmony." In chapter 3 of Section 5 One God of Theology, Ram Swarup explains the dangers of monotheism. Religious persecution is the result of worshipping the One True God for it fills its votaries with self righteousness, thus cripples the human psyche. The worship of multiplicity of Gods had its own evils — "superstitions, coarseness, illiberalism" — but it did not indulge in mass-scale religious persecutions. According to Ram Swarup, "it should modify our approach: we should purify our worship rather than impose our definition of the deity. If the quality of our worship is pure, it would be received by a deity who is equally pure. Otherwise it goes to feed the Asuras, the Ego Gods".

The chapters on Buddhist Teachings and Patanjali's Yoga give a thorough exposition of the subject dealt with. The book is well researched, scholarly and seems to be the fruit of first hand experience of spiritual life. Unlike many other highbrow writing on spirituality, this truly highbrow writing is eminently readable, and gives valuable insight into the subject of God, religion, worship and meditation.

— Prof. Leela Subramoni

ஐந்துவகை நம்பி உயிர் ஐந்துவகை உயிர் இரண்டுகை: சிவசூத்திரத்தின்படி நான்கு அடிப்படைகள் by Christopher Titmus. 1998. Pub: Rider, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA. pp219, £ 9.99

THE SECOND half of the twentieth century is marked by a plethora of books on the spiritual life, thus suggesting a mass awakening with a higher level of awareness. But quite a number of them are of no value to the sincere seeker for they contain half-baked notions of spirituality and deal in a superficial and shallow manner with a pre-formed subject. At the same time there are excellent books on the spiritual path that serve as external guides on one's inner journey. One such book is Light on Enlightenment by Christopher Titmus.

The book under review is a practical guide on the teachings of the Buddha. It is not a text book of Buddhist doctrine. The author has distilled the essence of Buddha's teachings, avoiding intellectual debate and textual controversies. The teachings as given here can be followed by anyone on the spiritual path. For instance, while discussing the Dharma — the second jewel of "the Three Gems"— Titmus says: "It is the commitment to the Awakening, Dharma and Sangha that truly matters, not identifying it with Buddhism." Non-Buddhists can benefit from the teachings as much as Buddhists. The Buddha was not a Buddhist, nor the founder of Buddhism.

The author elevates each principle of the teaching to a day-to-day life. As he says, "We explore the teachings through the moment-to-moment movements of our daily life." Each topic of discussion is followed by very useful instructions on "Practice" and a list of questions, "Inquiry", to help the reader test himself and understand what he has read.

All the important aspects of Buddha's teachings are clearly expounded — the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eight-fold path, the Three Gems, eight worldly conditions, the Three-fold Training, Five Hindrances, Four Foundations of Awareness, Five Precepts, Four Divine Abiding, Four Absorptions, Four Formless Realms and Four Noble Ones.

Anyone searching for light on the path to enlightenment should read this book. The subtitle uses the phrase “revolutionary teachings” but the exposition of the teaching shows that far from being revolutionary they have universal application and are relevant to all ages and periods and are rooted in highest traditions of spiritual upliftment.

A few printing mistakes come in the way of one’s reading—otherwise the book is an excellent guide to the spiritual seeker, the seeker after Truth.

— Prof. Leela Subramoni

அடபுத்திரம் அமீசுகரம் குறிப்புகள் by John Yale (Swami Vidyatmananda).2001. Pub: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai 600004 <SRKMath@vsnl.com>, pp313, Rs.50

THE BOOK under review is an excellent piece of literary work and helps us to know more about the functioning of the Ramakrishna Mission and Math. Its author, an American, got interested in the teachings of the Vedanta and wished to join the Ramakrishna Order. However, he wished to see and visualise for himself the *lila bhumi* of the great master Sri Ramakrishna, his revered consort Holy mother Sarada Davi and his most illustrious disciple Swami Vivekananda.

His first hand experience of the life and attributes of the functioning of the Ramakrishna Mission and Maths besides his visits to holy places and cities of India, has been compiled in this book. The author has given an insider’s view of the Ramakrishna Order, its style of functioning, rituals like initiation into *brahmacharya*, *sannyasa* etc. in ample detail. He is quite unprejudiced in dealing with the situations and people he encountered in his sojourn in India.

The book has a map of the holy town of Dakshineswar. The publisher’s note very briefly gives first hand information about the author and his memoirs being published by the Ramakrishna Math, Chennai after nearly five decades of the author’s visit to India.

The book has ten chapters. The chapter ‘Belur Math on the Ganges’ has very beautiful photographs of the Belur Math, the Dakshineswar Temple, besides pictures of Sri Ramakrishna Mission and Math at Belur (West Bengal, India). It also details the life and times of that period at Belur Math. The various etiquettes, mannerisms especially dealing with the life and work of the swamis of the Order.

The author not only visited various Ramakrishna Missions and Maths in his sojourn in India but also visited various holy places of India. A special chapter has been devoted to the author’s sojourn at South India. Right from his boarding the Madras Mail to intricate details of co-passengers as well as their habits and mannerisms, make delightful reading. The author had the privilege of viewing the Madras Math’s social, religious and literary activities. The author visited Belur, Halebid, Sravanabelagola, Kanchipuram, Bangalore, Mysore, Madurai, Mangalore etc.

The author also visited the Order’s ashram at Mayavati (Himalayas) and also the headquarters of the monthly journal *Prabuddha Bharata*. Readers have a rare opportunity to get a very good book at a highly subsidised rate.

—Santosh Kumar Sharma

கரம் கஜ்ஜெரூ ஒது அபுத்திரம் by Karl Gjellerup. 1999. Pub: Amaro Bhikku Abhayagiri Forest Monastery, 16201, Tomki Rd., CA 95470, USA. pp517. Free.

THE AUTHOR of this novel with a Buddhist theme was a Danish writer with special interest in Buddhism and Indian spirituality. The book was first published in German in 1906 and translated into English in 1916. Karl Gjellerup later published on Christian themes and in 1917 won the Nobel Prize for literature.

The hero of the novel is Kamanita, a very talented young man who sets on a long journey visiting holy places and meeting

friends as well as strangers. He is captivated by the picture of Vasitthi, the beautiful daughter of a rich goldsmith playing with balls. Later he meets her and enjoys her company, postponing his return to his native Ujjeni. The thrill is temporary and he and his friend Somadatta are attacked by an armed gang instigated by a rival suitor who is the son of a state minister. He is wounded severely but manages to return home with Vasitthi on horseback. He continues his travel but meets Vasitthi for romantic interludes. His caravan is attacked by bandits and his is severely wounded. A ransom is arranged and he is released and returns to the safety of his home. Unfortunately for him Sataira, the Minister’s son, marries Vasitthi. Persuaded by his father he marries Sita and gets two daughters. Desiring a son he marries Savitri. The two wives quarrel and charge him with favouritism and discrimination. In their misdirected fury they attack a begging monk who turns out to be the robber Angulimala! He proceeds to Kosala and narrates his story to Lord Buddha. The Lord’s sacred pronouncements on the Four Noble Truths, namely suffering, the origin of suffering, cessation of suffering and the path leading to it are similar to the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavadgita*. In his mundane life even Sri Krishna had to battle with so many evil forces. Liberation is gained by conquest of the evil forces.

A difficult book to review, being a whirlpool of selections from the original strung through with legendary fiction.

—T. Sankaran

நிகரம் கி அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர

குகி அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர (Tamil) by N. Jayasankar, S.Arumugasamy & K.Vijayalakshmi. Pub: Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems, Chennai 600085. <ciks@vsnl.com>, pp. 100.

கரம் அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர (Jan-July, 2001;Vol.21): Editor N.G. Hegde. <baif@vsnl.com>, pp. 28, Annual Subscription: Rs. 50, U\$10.

ஸ்திரமர குகி அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர பதிப்பு: Collection of articles by different authors. <baif@vsnl.com>, pp. 181, Rs. 100.

கரம் அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர by P.V.S. Suryanarayana Raju. Pub: <kspnv@hotmail.com>, pp. 60, Free.

குகி அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர (incl. Ramana Ashtottara Shatanamavali) (Telugu): Pub: Parasara M. Narasimham, Shree Ramana Maharshi Bhakta Mandali, Om Shree Vani Ramana Nilayam, 2-55 Street # 1, Vani Nagar, Hyderabad-47. pp. 40, Rs. 15.

அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர (Telugu translation of *Self-Realisation* by B.V. Narasimha Swami): by P.S. Sundaram. Pub: Sri Ramanasramam. pp. vii+214, Rs. 80.

ஸ்திரமர குகி இட ஸ்திரமர (A Collection of memories) (Telugu) by Smt. Kanakamma. Pub: Sri Ramanasramam. pp. vii+269, Rs. 60.

குகி அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர by Dr. R. Venkataraman. ISBN:81-90135-1-2. Pub: SKM Consultants, 8751, Sector C, Pocket 8, Vasant Kunj, Delhi 110070. <sadbhavana@hotmail.com>, pp. ix+122.

அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர by K.C. Subbaiah. Pub: Ramana Kendra, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110003. pp.107.

கரம் அபுத்திரம் குகி இட ஸ்திரமர by Dr Abdul Lathief. <abdullathief@sify.com>, <lathief@msn.com>. pp. 166, Rs. 75.

ஸ்திரமர குகி இட ஸ்திரமர (Text in Devanagari and Tamil). Tr. by T.V Kapali Sastri. Pub: Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastri Institute of Vedic Culture, Bangalore 560011. <kashyapx@vsnl.com>, <www.veda.com>, pp. xvii+219, Rs. 40. ▲



DEV GOGOI

ASHRAM BULLETIN

123rd ஆநாமிக்கல் இமம் உ ஆகி அகலும்பீடு

THE Jayanti celebrations of Sri Bhagavan have always been occasions for his devotees to gather at their Master's Feet and pay homage to him. This year too, devotees in their hundreds undertook the pilgrimage to the Ashram which wore a festive look from the preceding day. The after-dinner programme was a music performance by Ramananjali of Bangalore.

Devotees eagerly look forward to the early morning Tamil Parayana on Jayanti day. The sublime atmosphere created by a cool December dawn is a perfect setting for the chanting of *Ramana Sadguru*, that eternal master-

piece written by Satyamangalam Venkatarama Iyer. The chanting was done with great fervour. It was followed by the chanting of *Chatvarimsat* and milk offering to Bhagavan. *Mahanyasa Rudrabhishekam* and elaborate puja followed. The *arati* was the grand finale. The nagaswaram music by T. Pitchandi and party throughout the celebrations added to the occasion.

Though feeding of the poor is a daily routine at the Ashram, on Jayanti day, *Narayana Seva* has a unique character. A large *pandal* was erected at the *Kurangu Thottam* at the

western end of the Ashram and the sadhus were fed with specially cooked rice and sweets. Devotees were also treated to special lunch.

The celebrations were concluded with the evening concert of Ramana music by Sakkubhai Srinivasan and her group from Bangalore. Devotees returned to their homes, truly contented and spiritually elevated.

அக இவ மீட்டி

SRI Bhagavan's 123rd Jayanti was celebrated by Ramana Kendra, Chennai, with the usual enthusiasm and devotion. The programmes spread over two days, 21st and 22nd December, were held at the Ananthaswamy Dhyana

Mantapam in Mylapore. On the first morning there was Ekadasa Rudra Parayanam, Abhishekam, chanting of Sri Bhagavan's Aksharamanamalai, Annadanam and Arati, followed by distribution of prasad. That evening Smt. Shyamala Ramachandran rendered a Harikatha in Tamil titled 'Arunachala Ramanan'. This was followed by taking Sri Bhagavan's portrait in procession around Mylapore.

On the 22nd there was a seminar. Sri V. S. Ramanan, ashram President delivered the Presidential address. Dr D. G n a n a s u n d a r a m , S w a m i Vimurthananda, Sri S. Ram Mohan, Sri P. S. Rama Murthy, Dr T. N. Pranatharthi Haran and Sri T. G. Narayanaswamy delivered talks in

Tamil. A school student Kum. R. Ramya, Smt. Sarala Panchabakesan and David Frawley gave talks in English.

அம். நெ. அனாதவல்லி

THE Jayanti celebrations were as usual simple but impressive. The Ramana Kendram arranged a six-day programme from the 15th to 19th and the 21st December.

Smt. Ananadavalli Mahadevan inaugurated the Jayanti function at the Gujarti Samajam Hall on the 15th. Sri S. Guruswamy, President, welcomed the guests and Sri K. Rangaswamy gave a vote of thanks. Dr. Kala Rani Rengaswamy, Brahmachari Srinivasa Chaitanya, Prof. C.E. Sooriamoorthy, Dr. T.N. Pranarthi Haran and Dr. R. Venkataraman gave talks which were well received.

Smt. Saroja Santanam, Smt. Pitchammal-Sri Shankaran, Tamil Isai Sangam, among others sang with inspiration at various times during the festivities.

Many devotees from Madurai and nearby areas gathered at the Ramana Mandiram on the Jayanti day and participated in the special pujas and Sahasranama Archana to Bhagavan and joined in chanting the entire Stuti Panchakam. This was followed by delicious food given to the poor as well as bhiksha for invitees.

அம். க. அ. இ. ஜெ. ப. கீ. அ. (அ.க.)

JAYANTI was celebrated at G. J. College, Pachipenta in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh. Dr A. Mohana Rao presided over the cel-

ebrations. About 300 people gathered for the event at this remote village which borders the state of Orissa. Sri P. Krishnaje Rao delivered a talk on the teachings of Sri Bhagavan.

ஐ. பி. மீ. கீ. க. அ. நெ. கீ. இ. அ.

THE devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi enthusiastically gathered to remember and celebrate the life and teachings of our Master at residences and halls in different parts of Canada and the USA.

In Ottawa, at the home of Anantha Padmanabhan, monthly Sri Ramana satsanghs were inaugurated with devotion and simplicity on Bhagavan's Jayanti Day. By His grace, the devotees hope to continue the satsanghs with study of the commentaries by Bhagavan on the teachings. The group invites all devotees who are interested to share these moments in Ramana Satsangh.

On 21st December, Arunachala Ashrama celebrated the Jayanti in New York City. Srimati Mangalam Kalyanam, sister of the President Sri V.S Ramanan, spoke with deep devotion and insight on "Guru Kripa".

On 29th December at the home of Swaminathan and Sangeetha, in Union City, California, a few dozen devotees gathered and experienced the all-pervasive presence of Sri Bhagavan. Sri Rajagopalan, who had the great fortune of spending a day in the Master's presence in 1947 at the age of twenty-one, described in minute detail the serenity of his experience.

At the Shiva Vishnu Temple in Maryland, Dr. Narayanaswami, a trustee of the temple, requested the

Washington D.C. area devotees to organize a Jayanti program there. The program was on 8th January and began with Vedic chanting by the temple priest and a large number of devotees gathered in the hall arranged for this function. Bhagavan's works were sung, a part of Bhagavan's life in video was shown and talks on his birth were given. The prasad was a full meal which was distributed to the devotees at this and at all of the Jayanti programs mentioned above.

Programs also were conducted in Boston, Georgia, Michigan, Florida, Toronto and at Arunachala Ashrama, Nova Scotia.

கி. பி. மீ. அ. மீ.

PONGAL is the harvest festival of Tamil Nadu celebrated with great enthusiasm and élan, especially by the farmers. The festivities begin a day before the sun crosses the Tropic of Capricorn and continues for four days. It includes discarding and burning of the old pots, pans, brooms etc. and the cooking of pongal delicacies in new pots, paying homage to the cows that serve us throughout the year, and then we go picnicking. Sri Ramanasramam has a special reason to celebrate Pongal. Our dairy houses nearly a hundred cows and supplies the dining hall with fresh milk. The cow dung is utilized to produce biogas for the kitchen fires. Thus, it was fitting that the Ashram showed its gratitude to the cows by decorating them with flowers, sandal-paste and vermilion and performing puja to them. The cows enjoyed the sweet rice which they ate along with the garlands!

Many devotees participated in the festivities.

சுவாமி நெ. மு. கீ. கீ. அ. மீ. அ. மீ.

SWAMI Muruganar's house at Ramanathapuram, just north of Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu, was donated to the Ashram while Swami Muruganar was alive.

It is only recently, thanks to some devotees, that the house has been converted into a mandiram named "Muruganar Mandiram". A memorial building to conduct regular pujas and satsangh is planned. The local devotees will also have access to a proposed library.

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ACCORDING to a February newspaper report, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu informed a central team investigating the water crisis in the state, that the previous year's rainfall was the lowest in three decades. The state faces an acute drinking water shortage and hydel power generation has fallen by more than half.

Even with the lack of substantial rains this past monsoon period in November- December, the present water supply situation in the Ashram is alright.

The Ashram relies on two major borewells, one next to the ashram bookshop and the second near the Mountain Path office. There is also a large open well in front of the ashram office.

The extensive roof area of the dining hall-kitchen complex have been completely resurfaced to enable rain-water harvesting. Extra-large PVC

அம் அகாஷம்

The Ashram office is inundated with requests for accommodation every full moon by persons wishing to perform giripradakshina of Arunachala. The Ashram is simply unable to cope with the volume of enquiries and devotees may please cooperate by adjusting their programmes accordingly.

pipes channel the run-off from the north-west corner of the new dining hall to Pali Tirtam where the local residents all benefit from increased water availability. There has been a noticeable rise in the water levels of wells in the vicinity.

The other cause for this increase in the water table has been the reforestation of Arunachala. Generally it only required one-and-half inches of rain for run-off to occur but with the increased vegetation over two inches are needed before the rainwater run-off from the hill is felt on the lower levels where the Ashram is situated.

The new accommodation wing called Ramana Vijayam on Manakkula Vinayagar Street also has specially designed roofs which harvest rainwater for storage and later use. The water is fresh and clean.

நல்லாசனம்

THE Ashram received a steady flow of pilgrims this winter. The season saw a higher number than last year, nearly four thousand for the period November to January.

நி அருகம்

SRI Ramanasramam has had a website since 1995, <http://www.ramana-maharshi.org>, thanks to the prodigious efforts of Graham Boyd. It attracts an average of 600,000 visits per month, peaking at over one million per month on occasion. The site offers about 1,500 pages with over 1,000 photographs of Bhagavan, Arunachala and Sri Ramanasramam.

The Ashram video website, <http://www.ramanasramam-video.org>, shows downloadable video clips of the main events taking place at the Ashram throughout the year and averages about 300 visits a month.

மனநிலைகளைக் கவனிப்பதற்கு

ON behalf of all Ramana devotees, and *Mountain Path* readers in particular, I offer heartfelt thanks to Sri N. Ramasubramanyan, affectionately known to us as Ramamani, for ably editing *The Mountain Path* from 1995 to 2002. He enjoyed the grace of Bhagavan since childhood and worked closely with Mrs. Lucy Osborne during her editorship of this journal in the 1970s. We will always cherish his scholarship, devotion and gentle demeanour. I wish him health and fulfillment in his well-earned retirement.

I also welcome Mr. Christopher Quilkey who has assumed the responsibility of Editor as a service to Bhagavan. An Australian by birth, he has been a Ramana Nagar resident since 1975. I am confident that we will continue to see a magazine worthy of its founder-editor Arthur ▲ Osborne.

IMPORTANT DATES

Full Moon

Month	Date	Starts	Length
Mar	17th	6:30 p.m.	22 hours
April	16th	4:30 p.m.	22 hours
May	15th	12:30 p.m.	22 hours
June	13th	7:30 p.m.	22 hours

FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

Maha Shivaratri	Saturday	1.3.2003
Sri Vidya Havan	Friday	21.3.2003
Telugu New Year Day	Wednesday	2.4.2003
Tamil New Year Day	Monday	14.4.2003
Bhagavan's Aradhana	Monday	28.4.2003
Maha Puja (Mother's Aradhana)	Saturday	24.5.2003
Krishna Jayanti (Gokulashtami)	Tuesday	19.8.2003
Sri Bhagavan's Advent Day	Monday	1.9.2003
Navaratri Festival commences	Friday	26.9.2003
Saraswati Puja	Saturday	4.10.2003
Vijayadasami	Sunday	5.10.2003
Deepavali	Friday	24.10.2003
Karthigai Festival commences	Friday	28.11.2003
Karthigai Deepam	Sunday	7.12.2003
Sri Bhagavan's Jayanti	Thursday	8.1.2004

EVERY FULL MOON DAY (*puṇnima*) it is a circus here in Tiruvannamalai. About half a million people do the circumambulation of Arunachala. Apart from the Kartikai Deepam festival, such huge crowds have been coming here only for the last five years. It is a newfound enthusiasm. A film star talked about the greatness of Arunachala and Ramana Maharshi on TV and suddenly Tiruvannamalai was besieged by hordes of people converging from all parts of the country. For twenty-four hours they form a human garland around the mountain. Buses are jam-packed. Countless cars and vans of all sizes choke the streets of this small town.

Since time immemorial Arunachala has attracted seekers of truth. Nevertheless, it has been a secret place. Only a few serious seekers would come here to worship Lord Shiva. It is obvious that the crowds that now throng the area on *puṇnima* days do so for reasons other than purely spiritual. Information spread fast through word of mouth as to the material benefits that might accrue if one did pradakshina and this caused the huge influx of devotees. The power of the Hill is such that even people who originally came with solely material expectations and had no inclination towards the spiritual path, feel a compulsion to return each *puṇnima* because without it their lives would be bereft of meaning. One meets many ordinary people whose lives have been altered. Arunachala has not abdicated His responsibility of bestowing true knowledge on the sincere seeker. As Bhagavan said, it is good to go round the Hill, whatever the reason. Slowly but surely Arunachala will instill the desire for spiritual knowledge in those who do so.

People who are environmentally conscious are concerned about the threats that such huge crowds pose. Half a million people concentrated around a 14 km circle for twenty-four hours do leave a strong imprint on the town as well as on the various ashrams and shrines situated around the hill. Remnants of food and drink lie scattered all over the place. Discarded plastic cups and bags in thousands litter the 14 km path. The innumerable vehicles create air and noise pollution, which is the cause of numerous diseases. The vast amounts of human faeces and urine that litter the whole town including the girivalam path are another grave threat. All these contribute to the deterioration of the environment of Tiruvannamalai. This is a serious situation. However, we are *all* responsible, both residents and visitors alike, for polluting our physical *and* spiritual environment. What is the answer? I don't know. Perhaps *you* do?

— ஸ்ரீ. சீ. அழகர்நாதன் மீ. அ. அழகர்நாதன் ▲