

CONTENTS

RAMANA ASHTOTTARAM	2
EDITORIAL: The Heart	3
KEY WORD: Dehatma Buddhi	8
MIRACLES: Katya Osborne	9
ULLADU NARPADU SECOND BENEDICTORY VERSE: Ram Mohan	17
A VEDIC CONSECRATION TO THE SPIRITUAL HEART: David Frawley	21
SRI BHAGAVAN'S HANDWRITING: English	28
BHAGAVAN'S HERBAL REMEDIES	36
VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPHS	37
DESTINY AND FREEWILL: P. Sridharan	41
SRI ARUNACHALA PANCHARATNAM COMMENTARY: Sadhu Om	47
FROM OUR ARCHIVES	52
PADAMALAI THE HEART: Muruganar	55
SELF-ENQUIRY AND THE SPIRITUAL HEART: Patrick Roberts	59
BOOK EXCERPT THE RAMAYANA: Ramesh Menon	65
BOOK REVIEWS	73
ASHRAM BULLETIN	77
AFTER WORD	80

Ramana Ashtottaram

9. *Ōm Parāṣarakulōttamṣāya namaha.*

Prostration to the one who is born as the crown jewel of the Parasara lineage.

(Parasara Maharishi worshipped and sang hymns in praise of Agni, the Lord of Fire, who is also worshipped as Lord Arunachala, the divine pillar of fire. Sri Ramana saw in Arunachala, the symbol of the Supreme.

The place and the family lineage (*gotra*) of Ramana's birth were both significant. Brahmins trace their lineage from various sages. Ramana's family traces its lineage from Parasara, the father of Vyasa.

10. *Ōm Sundarārya tapah phalāya namaha.*

Prostration to the one who is the fruit of Sundaram's (Beauty's) penance (*tapas*)

(Sundara, Alagu and Ramana are three words all meaning beauty or sweetness. A worthy father (Sundaram Iyer) and a worthy mother (Azhagamma) were needed even for a *Karanodbhava*, and they must have accumulated much merit to have such a child).

11. *Ōm Kamanīya sucharitrāya namaha*

Prostration to that charming person with an excellent character.

(In the prelude to Ramayana, Sage Narada delineates for Valmiki the qualities that are present in a great person. Charming countenance and exemplary character are two of the prime qualities mentioned there. Bhagavan, right from a tender age, manifested these qualities.)

The Heart

“**B**Y the pure heart is he known. The Self exists in man, within the lotus of the heart, and is the master of his life and of his body. With mind illumined by the power of meditation, the wise know him, the blissful, the immortal.”¹

When we refer to ourselves, we do not point to our head and say, this is me. What we do generally is point to our chest, and refer the observer to our heart. We know at some profound level that our thoughts are not our essence but our heart is. When we say our heart we refer to what is most significant about us. Our mind we see as an instrument but we rarely consider ourselves to be solely the mind with its combination of personal and impersonal ideas. One who is thought of as being without heart, not to be trusted, is also considered to be out of touch with reality.

“Call it by any name, God, Self, the heart or the seat of Consciousness, it is all the same. The point to be grasped is this, that Heart means the very core of one's being, the Centre, without which there is nothing whatever”². We should be careful to discriminate

¹ *Mundaka Upanishad*, 2.ii.4.

² *Maharshi's Gospel*, Part 2, Ch. 4.

between the heart we refer to, and the heart which in yogic practice is called the *anahata*, centred in the middle of the chest and seat of emotion. For us the Heart is that which does not change, it is beyond thought. It is always present within us.

It is our heart we hold most dear. It is who we consider ourselves really to be. Unique, untainted, it is what makes us harmonious or pleasant (*ananda*). This love of life itself, the feeling of happiness comes from the heart not the head. And god help those whose heart is dark. They are cast out into the wilderness. They can spend a lifetime seeking for something that they know is missing, but they do not realise it is in their own heart.

Like the sun our heart generates light and love. It is an internal secret realm (*guha*), something we never can fully reveal to others because our mind is not subtle enough to catch it.

Bhagavan composed a series of verses entitled *The Necklet of Nine Gems*. The first verse describes the relationship between Arunachala Siva and Nataraja Siva. "Siva as Nataraja is one who churns and whirls the energies of the universe around Himself. He creates and destroys the universe through the pulsation (*spanda*) of his universal will while he abides unmoving (*achala*) in the heart — the centre of the circle of energy (*shakti*) which encompasses him. Siva as Arunachala is the still point and according to Bhagavan, stillness (*achala*) means perfection or knowledge (*jnana*). Why? There is no movement in the heart space and therefore it is timeless, eternal. If one were to follow through the logic of this, it is fullness (*purnam*). He is One, he is Achala."³

Once we remember the centre and are identified with the pure 'I' consciousness, we too are liberated. That is why Bhagavan equates the heart with Arunachala. Each is the equivalent of the other. One on the internal level, the other, the external. When we think of the

Siva as
Arunachala
is the
still point

³ Unpublished commentary by Sadhu Om.

true Arunachala we are in harmony with ourselves. It is rather bizarre when one really considers it. This seeming pile of rocks is a perfect reflection of our true nature. We know this from Bhagavan's own words and from our intimate experience of Arunachala.

Bhagavan arrived at the central point and abides in permanent union with Brahman, sharing its unalterable nature and emulating its 'actionless activity' (or as the Bhagavad Gita would say : 'action without desire'), he reached the pure intensity of emptiness, completely detached from all transitory manifestation.

Bhagavan quite often mentioned the fact that when we refer to ourselves we point to our heart on the right side of the chest. Though it seems naïve to make this assertion, when we consider our own experience we realise the effectiveness of his statement. What we always need to remember is that Bhagavan spoke from direct knowledge, and though he would explain using the concepts and imagery of sacred texts, he was not bound to them for final approval nor did he need to defend a conceptual position. He used what was available to show people the way to their own heart. His own inimitable experience was the lodestar by which he expounded the truths he directly perceived. That is why he is called a Maharshi, a great seer.

"When a schoolboy says 'It is I that did the sum correctly', or when he asks you "Shall I run and get the book for you", would he point out to the head that did the sum correctly, or to the legs that will carry him swiftly to get you the book? No, in both cases, his finger is pointed quite naturally towards the right side of the chest, thus giving innocent expression to the profound truth that the source of 'I'-ness in him is there. It is an *unerring* intuition that makes him refer to himself, to the heart which is the Self, in that way. The act is quite *involuntary* and *universal*, that is to say, it is the same in the case of every individual"⁴.

Though Bhagavan indicated the right side of the chest can in this physical world be the source of our being, we should be careful and

⁴ *Maharshi's Gospel*, Part 2, Ch. 4.

not assume our true Self is located in a physically limited area. He said, “The Heart is used in the Vedas and the scriptures to denote the place whence the notion ‘I’ springs. Does it spring only from the fleshy ball? It springs within us somewhere right in the middle of our being. The ‘I’ has no location. Everything is the Self. There is nothing but that. So the Heart must be said to be the entire body of ourselves and of the entire universe, conceived as ‘I’. But to help the practitioner (*abhyasi*) we have to indicate a definite part of the Universe, or of the Body. So this Heart is pointed out as the seat of the Self. But in truth we are everywhere, we are all that is, and there is nothing else”.⁵

For the purposes of our identification with the body and limited understanding, Bhagavan differentiated a physical place where we can begin the search from the arising of the ‘I’ thought (*aham vritti*). It is an explanation but like all metaphors is meant to indicate and is not intended to *equate* our Heart with a gross explanation as if the spiritual heart were also a muscular organ.

Since we are identified with the physical body there is also in that assumed scheme of things, a fixed place we can say is the seat where the sense of I arises. It is called the Heart. Once we are clear on this point we can follow the reasoning in Bhagavan’s explanations. We should not limit Bhagavan’s vision to the gross manifestation. He has transcended all levels of appearance and is not identified with any forms, and that includes chakras on a subtle level of manifestation. He may use forms as an illustration but they should not be construed as being the final truth, they are merely pointers.

According to Bhagavan the sushumna does not stop at the crown (*sahasrara*) but continues like a seahorse tail directly to the heart by what is called the *atma nadi*. For *jnana* to occur the current of awareness must subside into the Heart. Here again we need to be very careful. We can speak of an actual physical occurrence where in time and space the kundalini rises to the crown chakra, and then is

absorbed into the Heart. To put it another way, we can indicate, and no more than indicate, the sense of ‘I’ that is manifested in many thoughts and is subsumed into the Heart which is beyond time and space. It is here we can argue indefinitely various viewpoints. We see a conversion from form to the formless. How can that be? We see a transcendence of time, *in* time, into the timeless. How can that happen? It is here we are totally reliant upon the word of Bhagavan. It is a leap of faith.

From the standpoint of *jnana yoga* Bhagavan reverses the analogy and explains that “The Heart is self-luminous. Light arises from the Heart and

The Heart is self-luminous
Light arises from the Heart
and reaches the brain,
which is the seat
of the mind

reaches the brain, which is the seat of the mind. The world is seen with the mind, that is, by the reflected light of the Self. It is perceived with the aid of the mind. When the mind is illumined it is aware of the world. When it is not itself so illumined, it is not aware of the world. If the mind is turned in towards the source of light, objective knowledge ceases and Self alone shines forth as the Heart”.⁶

In the ultimate analysis even to say we can achieve the absorption of the ‘I’ thought into the Heart is a false concept because we have never stood apart from the Heart in the first place. This is the wonder, this is the mystery. We already are that and for Bhagavan to step down and lead us gently on using the analogies of our own delusions demonstrates his compassion and patience in the face of our persistent ignorance.

The world rises and sets with the mind. What the Heart demonstrates to us is the fact that the Self, our true nature, is the underlying principle which is unaffected by the mind which by definition, is a series of momentary modifications. We should always

⁵ Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk 29.

⁶ Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk 98.

remember the Self is not explained by a demonstration of mechanics but is a principle, and as such can never be contained by any explanation. It is the cause not an effect. In like manner, Bhagavan is the cause of our understanding, he is not the result of our understanding. ▲

KEYWORD

DEHATMA-BUDDHI

Deha: The body; *Atma*: the Self; *Buddhi*: Conviction

Dehatma Buddhi: The conviction that the body is the Self, in other words, the 'I am the body' idea.

The root cause of our suffering is the mind, the identification of the sense of 'I' with the physical body. Bhagavan constantly stresses that the root cause of all troubles is the false identification 'I am the body'. This identification is itself the mind — it is this 'I' limited to the body (the 'I'-thought) that thinks all other thoughts. If you read Sri Bhagavan's original works you will find he constantly talks about the identification 'I am the body' but seldom if ever about 'I am the mind', for the simple reason that the identification 'I am the body' is itself the mind. The mind rises by identifying a body as 'I', and it does not subside until it ceases identifying a body as 'I'.

The mind is not the real 'I', which ever shines as the pure adjunctless consciousness 'I am'; it is a false superimposition that appears as 'I am the body', like the appearance of an imagined snake seen superimposed on a rope. Just as the snake when scrutinised closely is found to be nothing but a rope, so the mind when scrutinised closely is found to be nothing but the pure adjunctless 'I am'. "When one scrutinises the form of the mind without inadvertence, there is no such thing as mind; this is the direct path for all", sings Sri Bhagavan in *Upadesa Undiyar*, verse 17. ▲

Miracles

KATYA OSBORNE

ONCE upon a time and long, long ago, there lived a great sage and teacher. In those days esoteric knowledge was not openly available to all, instead one had to find a teacher who was willing and able to impart this knowledge and apprentice oneself to him. Such a man was the sage of this story and he would take only three pupils at a time for ten year periods. The lucky three came to him with offerings of fruit and flowers and then their instruction would begin.

Ten years passed and the students were told that their education was completed and they could leave. They came in turn to receive his blessing, and after again offering fruit and flowers the first acolyte asked for the master's approval and permission to go out into the world and take up the work he had learned.

"And what have you learned?" The master asked

"Revered one," answered the student "I have learned to conjure gold and precious jewels out of the air. I have learned to make myself invisible. I have learned to transport my body to any place that my mind can imagine."

"And are you content?" asked the sage.

"Oh yes great one." Answered the student.

“Then go with my blessing.

The next student came along with his gifts. The question put to him by the sage was the same and the answer was nearly the same, except that he had also learned to transform his appearance so that he could resemble any deity.

“And are you content?” asked the sage.

“Oh more than content great one.”

“Then go with my blessing.”

The third man presented himself and he too had learned all the knowledge that the other two had acquired.

“And are you content?” asked the sage.

The man stood with his head bowed but did not reply.

“What troubles you?” asked the sage.

“I have learned all these tricks,” answered the man, “but what has that to do with spiritual wisdom?”

The sage smiled at him. “Come with me,” he said. “You I will teach.”

This story was told to me many years ago, and growing up in and around Bhagavan I felt that it reflected the flavour of his attitude towards life and miracles. Everything was so low key that one could never be sure if he had interfered or not. He was never dramatic or flamboyant. A nod or smile was the most one could hope for. And yet...we all...including the children, knew without question that he could do anything at all, anything he wanted. And even at that very young age we knew that he never wanted. And yet people came and beseeched him for favours and boons. I suspect that many times people got their wish but in such a personal and private way that no one else was aware of it. Perhaps even they were unsure whether Bhagavan had helped them or not. But mostly peoples' faith in Bhagavan remained unshaken in spite of his personal trade mark which was...everything low key and quiet. Nothing ostentatious. Ever.

A bullock cart driver came one day when I was sitting in the hall. It was monsoon time and it poured. This had been going on for

days and it was expected to continue. His problem was that his wife had died and he had to complete her cremation ceremony by that afternoon. He was a very poor man and could not afford a cremation under cover. He explained all this to Bhagavan who looked out of the window and said in the manner of any one of us:

“It *may* clear up later on.”

That was enough for the man. He went off and made all the arrangements and of course, sure enough, it did clear up that afternoon long enough for the cremation to take place, and then it poured again.

That was so typical of the way Bhagavan did things. One could never be really sure that he had done anything at all.

The most spectacular thing I *ever* heard of during all the years, even taking into account the way that stories grow in content and how exaggerated many of the tales become over the years, happened at the biksha given one year at Jayanthi. All the food was prepared for a thousand people but someone had forgotten to order fruit and there was none. Flushed and worried the man in charge came to Bhagavan and explained his dilemma and that he was in deep trouble over his negligence. Bhagavan didn't say a word, but he listened. The man got back and reported to the Sarvadhikari in the office and he was just in time to hear a phone call from the station master of Tiruvannamalai saying that they had a large consignment of oranges on the station platform. The sender's name was lost, in fact the paper work was lost altogether but it was assumed that they were for the ashram so would someone please come and get them. As I recollect, there was no oohing and aahing. In fact no one was unduly surprised. Someone had asked Bhagavan for help and received it...in his inimitable style. Low key and no one could actually point a finger and say wow, miracle! It was just a parcel without an address. These things happen.

Everyone who lived in or around the ashram back then had a story, but infected as we were by the spirit of Bhagavan, most of us kept our stories very private. Life was always ostensibly undramatic for all of us.

My own unforgettable memory happened when I was about ten years old. A lady from Delhi came to the ashram. In those days all foreigners were sent to our house as my parents spoke several languages and could understand a number of travellers. Also in those days whether a person came from New York, New Zealand or New Delhi, they were foreigners. This particular lady told us her story which I thought was unutterably tragic. She had married against her parents' wishes, but she married for love and the first few days of her marriage were blissfully happy. They went to the seaside for their honeymoon and she sat on the sand while her husband went for a swim. She actually saw him being caught by a shark and killed in front of her. Since then she was a nervous wreck. She then started a trek around all the ashrams and holy men of India. Why? She wanted to know. How had they harmed anyone and why should they be visited by such a terrible punishment. The point came when she could not stand to listen to any more ambiguous anodyne answers, so she had written her questions down and her list went with her whenever she came to a new holy man. No one was going to fob her off any more. If there was an explanation she wanted to hear it, and if not why not. What I recollect most about this lady was that she was so tense and nervous that it was a strain to be in her company. I was not an especially sensitive child, but sitting in the same room as her was excruciatingly uncomfortable. I started to escape but my mother caught me.

"Take her to the hall." She instructed me. I had things to do I told her, but my mother said "GO"

I went.

When we got to the ashram I pointed to the hall where Bhagavan was sitting and then took myself off to read my book in a mango tree.

I heard the bell for lunch and dragging my feet I went to fetch the lady home for food. Never in my life, neither before nor in all the years since, have I noticed such a change in anyone, and in such a short time. The lady was relaxed and at peace. I trailed behind her on the way back, too shy to ask her what Bhagavan had said but

aching to know. Why oh why hadn't I stayed in the hall with her. Whatever the words were that Bhagavan had spoken, they must surely be the most important in the world. I wanted to know them for posterity. The rest of my life could be transformed by the words I hadn't heard. However I knew that my mother would ask her so I stuck around like glue in order to hear the magic formula.

My mother of course noticed the difference immediately. One couldn't miss it. She asked the all important question. What had Bhagavan said to her?

He just looked,
full of understanding
and compassion

"Nothing." The lady replied. She had sat there all prepared, with her list at the ready, then Bhagavan looked at her. He just looked, full of understanding and compassion, and she suddenly lost interest in her crusade. It didn't matter any more. She had found the peace she craved.

Nothing could be more miraculous than what happened to that lady, and nothing more typical of Bhagavan. He didn't say a word.

Bhagavan's touch was always exquisitely light but sure. He would hint but never be obvious, whether he was performing a 'miracle' or letting a person know what was best for them to do. And yet a hint from him should never be ignored. If he takes the trouble to make us aware, well then, we disregard it at our peril.

When I was about nine years old I fought my mother on a daily basis on the business of brushing my hair. She wanted to. I didn't. The whole business became a major battle which reached crisis point on a daily basis. Left to its own devices my hair resembled a haystack. One had to look at my feet to see which way I was facing! One day my mother ran me down near the cowshed where Bhagavan was sitting and talking to Lakshmi the cow. She semi-jokingly complained to Bhagavan about my recalcitrant attitude and so I ran away again. Later, in the dining hall Bhagavan looked at me and made a comic face as he put both hands up to show a huge mop of hair. It was funny and I laughed with everyone else. It seemed as though making

a serious fuss about one's hair was not really worthwhile, there were more important things to deal with in life.

I didn't comb my hair however.

When I came home from school for the holidays that year, the issue of my hair had evaporated, but the picture of Bhagavan teasing me in the dining hall remained. I always knew that nothing Bhagavan did was without significance and it was brought home to me that in his gesture there was a message.

Bhagavan is watching over us, and he may make suggestions, however obliquely, even possibly as a comedy, but he is doing it for a purpose and perhaps as one gets older his subtle guidance becomes increasingly important. It probably does not hurt as much to learn one's lessons when they are relatively trivial, one is young and they are only as painful as dragging a comb through tangled hair, whereas making a drama over something essentially unimportant can be destructive...even self-destructive. Also it is often only a disguise for the glorification of the ego.

There is a definite feeling that Bhagavan's infinite compassion spills over onto us all our lives and he can admonish us out of pure love. Sometimes the lessons are painful, but only he knows how much more excruciatingly agonising our lives could be if we proceeded without the benefit of his help, or if we ignored it out of ignorance or hubris.

It is hard to accept that pain and grief and sickness are possibly a great kindness when viewed overall. My brother, who played at Bhagavan's feet as a baby, who spoke to him daily as a child, and who loved him as a figure of wonder, suffered for many years from Organic Brain Syndrome. Towards the end of his life he could neither walk nor talk nor understand, and yet when he died there was an amazing feeling of peace and fulfilment. He had completed his tasks and endured all the vicissitudes that had accrued to him, and he had

Bhagavan's infinite
compassion
spills over onto us
all our lives
and he can admonish
us out of pure love

done it in a compacted record time. It was hard for him to live through, but in his compassionate way Bhagavan arranged things so that Adam hardly knew what was going on. Now it is over. I believe that he never needs to come back to attend to unfinished business.

When Adam's condition started to deteriorate badly we found it very hard to move him from place to place. He was a big man, 6'3" tall and well built. I sat in the hall one day, in front of Bhagavan's picture and explained this to him. I told him that we really needed some help please. A young lad came to ask for work. He said he would like to help to look after my brother. Suresh is 5'1". His hobby is weight lifting and he could lift the big, heavy man as though he were a baby!

This happened only a few years ago but it really doesn't matter whether one speaks to Bhagavan today or many years ago when he had a body we could see and relate to. No ego means no fizz and flash. No handle to attach to an event so that it can shine out and glitter. Bhagavan was/is, more than a great guru. He is a jnani and he hears us all the time whether we want him to or whether we do not. He himself said that if we take one step towards our goal then the guru will take the other nine. Learning to put our whole faith and trust in him is a possible step. Believing that he does not abandon us, but stays with us to teach us what we need to learn, albeit sometimes in a painful way, is hard but rewarding. At this point trust is difficult but necessary in order to understand what it is that we need to be taught. Everyone has their own inner dialogue with Bhagavan and their own personal route map of where they are going. Coming to him at all in the first place is our first step. ▲



Ulladu Narpadu

Based on Lakshmana Sharma's
Commentary

second benedictory verse

S. RAM MOHAN

IN the second benedictory verse Bhagavan tells us about two different levels of experience – the theistic belief in a personal god and the absolute, in which there is no room for concepts, let alone one of god. At the theistic level, the fear of death impels one to seek reassurance at the feet of the Lord in whatever name or form which comes naturally. At the absolute level, no such fear arises because in the state of oneness where there is no sense of 'otherness' there is the experience of fearlessness and deathlessness. In the first benedictory verse the true nature of the Brahman which is not limited by qualities was explained. In the second benedictory verse Bhagavan explains that for those who follow the path of devotion, initially, the same Brahman appears as *Ishvara*, the personal God, who assumes the ideal name and form. This personal God is the highest concept of thought the mind can generate. For most people whose minds cannot dwell in a thought-free state they can follow bhakti yoga, the path of

devotion, which reaches its peak in selfless love of Him. They reach the same Self through His grace. This truth is expounded in the second benedictory verse.

“Those (of purified minds) who have an intense fear of death take refuge at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord (*Isvara*) who is beyond sin and death. With that, their ego dies, along with all its adjuncts. Will such people ever harbour the fear of death?”

The fear of death comes to all of us at one time or other. However it does not usually result in any awakening. A transient mood known as ‘*smasana vairagyam*’ or ‘the burial ground non-attachment’ arises while witnessing death, but it vanishes if the mind is distracted by other impressions such as talk, food or some other pleasant activity. But the ‘ripe’ ones (*pakvi*) do not let the ‘mood’ slip away. They seek the means of evolving from it and ultimately attain deliverance.

Among millions, only one or two who are highly evolved, take to the path leading to right awareness by cheerfully and courageously encountering the thought of death. The Buddha and Bhagavan Ramana are heroes who conquered death because they saw that in fact it did not exist. Bhagavan was profoundly affected as a boy by the death of his father and later at Madurai he experienced directly the fear of death which immediately drove him inward to seek the true source of his being. He realized he was unaffected by death. In the Puranas we have another example in Markandeya who took refuge in Lord Shiva when confronted by the fear of death. By total one-pointed identification with his personal God Markandeya became immortal. Fearlessness arises when we understand there is no other but Oneself, and consequently there is nothing to fear. This is right knowledge (*jnana*).

The fear of death which relentlessly pursues us comes about because of the sense of separation. “Truly, fear arises only from a sense of duality” (Brh Up. 1 iv 2). What is meant by this is that if we think of

The fear of death
comes to
all of us
at one time
or other.

ourselves as separate entities, loneliness and isolation and ultimately death manipulate our perceptions. It is our identification with the ego and its adjuncts which cause the soul to journey from one physical body to another. It is the cessation of this identification which constitutes liberation (*moksha*).

For us who are entangled in this world, *maya*, because of ignorance, the sorrows that occur in the worldly life must serve as stepping stones for salvation. The Bhagavad Gita recognises that the keen perception of misery and aimless pain and subjection to death are ingredients to develop *jnana*. (Bh.G. xiii.8). In the Mahabharata Krishna granted Kunti, the mother of the five Pandavas a boon. In response she asked: “Let misfortunes befall us ever”, because she knew the value of suffering to purify the mind. It is the catalyst for the vital act of self-surrender. In Bhagavan’s words “If in the course of a dream, a sleeper is seeing only that which is pleasant he would not awaken, but he wakes up when what he

sees is painful. In the same way the worldly man will never wake up from the illusory dream of ignorance to attain awareness and one’s true nature as Brahman. He can reach that state only

Kunti knew the
value of suffering
to purify the mind

when he goes through the travails of worldly life (*samsara*) and the fear of death. Even though there is the knowledge of death an intense fear of it does not arise except when it is seen face to face. Therefore it is usually the utter conviction that worldly life is, on the whole, one of misery that will be effective in turning one’s mind away from worldliness (*pravritthi*). When the mind is turned away from the world (*nivritthi*) towards the goal of deliverance, it reaches realisation through detachment (*vairagya*)”.¹

Consequent to the mind following the *nivritthi* path, it becomes receptive to the grace of the supreme eternal Lord. That grace turns the mind inward away from the world and makes it merge in the

² We are unable to locate the reference in Ramana literature and presume the quote is taken directly from Lakshmana Sharma’s personal notebooks — Editor.

supreme Brahman. Simultaneously all the binding mental imprints of thought (*vasanas*) together with the ego, are destroyed.

What is 'ego'? It is just the erroneous idea "I am the body" or "I am the mind" – so long as it prevails the death that overtakes the body is attributed to the Self. When ego dies, there can be no thought of physical death because the very root, the ego-sense is no longer there. This is the truth Bhagavan conveys in the secondary benedictory verse.

The main impact of Bhagavan's revelation is the direct path of enquiry – the conquest of the Self. The sine qua non for this is the ability to distinguish between the real and the unreal, the faculty known as discrimination (*viveka*). The goal of enquiry is the experience of the truth of the real Self. Thus there are three main divisions in this revelation :

- i) the preliminary discrimination between the unreal and the real;
- ii) the inquiry or the quest of the real Self;
- iii) the inherence as that Self as the culmination of that quest.

Though it happens that all the three facets are dealt with in almost all verses, a scrutiny of the sequence of the verses reveal that the verses describing the process of discrimination have been placed first, those that describe the process of the quest second, and finally those dealing with the nature of the experience of the Self. ▲

A Vedic Consecration to the Spiritual Heart

DAVID FRAWLEY

IN Vedantic thought the Heart (*hridaya*) is the seat of the Self (*atman*), so much so that the main Vedantic formulation for liberation (*moksha*) is the realization of the Self in the Heart. The *Upanishads* acclaim this in numerous verses and establish it as the object of many methods of knowledge (*vidyas*). The heart is the Supreme Reality. When we refer to ourselves we point to the heart. Compared to the heart, the mind is just our computer system where we hold our information, not our real consciousness or self-identity.

Yet the spiritual heart is not just the seat of the Self as such, it is also the source of all the main aspects and faculties of our entire nature as embodied souls. It is the seat of the mind (*chitta*) as the *Yoga Sutras* indicate. By this is meant not the outer mind but the inner, core or source mind, the source of all our karmas and samskaras. The heart is similarly the source of *prana* or our life energy, the force that animates our various bodies from birth to birth,

not merely as the breath but as the power behind all that we can do or think. The heart is also the source of speech, the unstruck sound or *anahata shabda*, and when we speak truly we speak from the heart.

The heart is the source of our entire being. All our different faculties are like different rays branching out from the central light of the heart which is like the Sun. All our energies are conduits of this eternal heart, however far they may wander from it. In deep sleep we return to this inner light for necessary peace and renewal, showing that we cannot remain apart from it even for a day.

Yet the heart is not just the source of our individual existence (*atman*). It is also our place of unity and connection with the cosmic existence (*Brahman*). It spreads not just through our entire individual beingness but throughout the entire universe. In the heart resides our main connection with the *devatas*, the great cosmic powers – the gods and goddesses which rule the universe, its evolution and its different planes of existence. Each one of our individual faculties arising from the heart has its corresponding cosmic deva ruling a corresponding power of nature and the greater universe. The sun, the moon, the stars, the earth and all aspects of the cosmic creative force dwell within the heart, which is the heart of all creation.

This heart or *hridaya* is obviously not the mere physical organ. Nor is it simply the heart centre, the *anahata chakra* of the subtle body, though it is closely related to it. This heart is the core of our being, which is the core of Being itself. The heart is where we experience our own self-being and through it contact the nature of all things, animate and inanimate. This *hridaya* could be better called the ‘spiritual heart’ in distinction to the physical and subtle heart centres.

The following is a beautiful prayer of consecration to the heart from the Krishna Yajur Veda (*Taittiriya Brahmana*). It is still commonly chanted in many ashrams and temples today, particularly in

All our energies
are conduits of
this eternal heart

South India, though not everyone contemplates its true meaning. It is often included in the greater *rudram* chant sacred to Lord Shiva. It consists of a consecration of all of our faculties, along with their cosmic counterparts, into the heart and the Supreme Being within. This Vedic heart prayer reconstructs the Cosmic Person (*Purusha*), the universal Self that is our true Being and is the Brahman, the Being of the entire universe. Only when we realign the cosmic powers with our individual faculties can we return them to our true heart that is universal.

Such a consecration in the heart is true *pratyahara* in the yogic sense – withdrawing all our faculties for the highest meditation. It is the reintegration of our scattered energy and attention into the Supreme Self, which is the supreme Yoga – the Yoga of the spiritual heart. It can be performed as preliminary to or as along with Self-inquiry in order to make inquiry more effective. It can be done along with any other yoga practices as well to ground them in the heart. I have added a short commentary to make this ancient Vedic prayer more relevant to the modern reader who may not understand the underlying Vedic concepts.

1. *May fire (Agni) be placed in my speech (Vak), my speech in the heart (hridaya), the heart in me (mayi), the I (aham) in the immortal (amritam), the immortal in Brahman.*

By Agni or Fire is here meant the divine light hidden in matter, the way fire is hidden in wood. Through this hidden light of the immanent divine alone are we able to articulate ourselves, bringing the light of the Self into our waking activities through the power of speech.

2. *May the Wind (Vayu) be placed in my breath (prana), my breath in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

By Vayu or Wind is meant the divine energy that operates in the universe on all levels of matter, life and mind. Through this divine cosmic energy alone, all action occurs and our own *prana* is able to function, giving us life and capacity for all that we do.

3. *May the Sun be placed in my eye, my eye in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

By Surya or the Sun is meant the divine light that illumines the world, which inwardly is the light of consciousness, through which the eye functions and the mind perceives. That supreme eye is also located in the heart.

4. *May the Moon be placed in my mind, my mind in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

By the Chandra or the Moon is meant the reflective power of the divine light that allows us to feel and to understand, which is the basis of our emotional nature. That is rooted in the heart as well.

5. *May the Directions be placed in my hearing, my hearing in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

The Directions of space reflect the divine presence that envelopes and comprehends everything. Through these powers of space we can hear, listen, know and become one with the cosmic space that is the space within us and the space within the heart.

6. *May the Waters placed in my generative fluid, my generative fluid in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

The cosmic Waters are the creative powers in the universe, the Divine Mothers through which all creativity occurs down to the level of procreation. When we link our creative powers with those of the heart, we are reborn through the heart, into immortality, entering into the cosmic waters of consciousness.

7. *May the Earth be placed in my body, my body in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

The entire Earth is our real body, of which our physical body is but a representative. This essence of the body dwells in the heart. It is created out of the heart's desire for embodied existence and lasts as long as this desire continues. By returning the desire for the body into the heart, we can experience the entire universe as our own greater body.

8. *May herbs and trees be placed in my hair, my hair in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

All of nature is part of our greater or cosmic body, as we are all the Purusha or Cosmic Person in various forms. By placing all aspects of nature in our heart, which is their true home, we can experience all of nature as ourselves.

9. *May Indra be placed in my strength, my strength in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

Indra is the Lord of Power or Shakti, who rules over the universe both externally and internally, as the master force behind all energies and actions. Our true strength, which is that of the heart, is only that of Indra. When we know this, we have the strength of Indra, we gain the universal power!

10. *May the Rain God (Parjanya) be placed in my head, my head in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

Parjanya here is the deity of the brain marrow, the subtle fluid or Soma that exists in the head. Placing this creative force of the sky in our heads, we can experience the rain of bliss, which then takes us back to the heart.

11. *May Shiva be placed in my spirit, my spirit in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

Shiva here is *Ishana*, a Vedic form of Shiva, as the supreme power behind the universe. His spirit or *manyu* is his energetic spirit, his will-power that directs all things. Placing that Divine Will in our hearts, our natural motivation must take us to the Supreme.

12. *May my self be placed in the Self, the Self in the heart, the heart in me, the I in the immortal, the immortal in Brahman.*

All these consecrations are different forms of placing the Self into the Self, merging the powers of the universal Self into the individual Self, into the heart, into the I, into the immortal, and finally into Brahman, the Absolute. All life really consists of such offerings of the Self to the Self, Brahman to Brahman, God to God.

All life really
consists of
such offerings
of the Self
to the Self

13. *May my Self return again. May my life (Ayur) return again. May my prana return again. May my will return again.*

As long as we are caught in the ego-self, we don't really have a Self. Our self is another, an object, an image, a worldly appearance or a bodily form. When we offer all aspects of our nature into the heart, we return to our true Self that is everyone and no one.

Similarly, as long as we are caught in the ego or worldly life, we don't have a real life. We are ruled by death, desire and compulsion. Only when we contact the universal life in the heart can we be said to be truly alive and to gain our true term of existence, which is immortal. Then all things and all creatures are our life! How much more wonderful this is than merely being trapped in a personal life that is of little interest to anyone but ourselves. Through this mergence in the heart we gain the highest Prana, which is not just the power of the breath, but the universal vitality and energy. Then our true will, which is for the good of all, naturally returns. Our lives become an offering of joy to joy.

14. *May the Universal God (Vaishvanara) increase with his rays dwell within me as the guardian of immortality.*

Agni Vaishvanara or the Universal God is the Vedic symbol for the Supreme Self and liberated soul according to great modern Rishis like Ganapati Muni and Kapali Shastri. All our individual faculties and all their corresponding cosmic powers are portions of his being, which also transcends them. The Vedic sacrificial journey takes us from the lower form of Agni or fire, which is speech, to the highest form, Vaishvanara, the universal being, the Supreme Self identified with the Sun or the supreme light, Vishnu himself. A related teaching about Agni Vaishvanara occurs in the *Chandogya Upanishad*.

Each of our individual faculties (those of the individual Self or *Jivatman*) has its cosmic counterpart or correlation with the

Only when we contact
the universal life
in the heart
can we be said
to be truly alive

Universal Being (those of the Supreme Self or *Paramatman*). Those listed here are the typical Vedic correspondences starting with our five main faculties of speech, breath, eye, mind and ear and their cosmic counterparts of Fire, Wind, Sun, Moon and the Directions of Space. These are the five main faculties of the subtle body or *linga sharira*, through which rebirth occurs. They represent not only the outer organs but their inner essences – our inner speech, inner breath, inner sight, inner mind and inner hearing. Our outer faculties are merely manifestations of these inner powers that are inherent in the soul or *Jiva*. These five are the five main factors of the internal Vedic sacrifice (*Antaryaga*) which is the Yoga offering. In this regard, Ganapati Muni created a new modern yogic sacrifice using Vedic verses relative to these five factors called *Indra-Yajna*.

When Bhagavan Ramana achieved his Self-realization as a mere lad of sixteen, he first simulated the death experience and merged all of his attention and vitality into the heart. This Vedic prayer provides a good method for doing this. It outlines the process of Self-inquiry, not only through the mind, but through all of our faculties. All our energies have their root in the heart, even the core energy of the body itself. To really practice Self-inquiry is to practice it in such a complete, integral and holistic manner, not simply to repeat the question 'Who am I' mentally, but to trace all that we are and all through which we live back into the heart.

However, it is not necessary to follow the details of this prayer in one's meditation. What is important is to learn to merge our speech, breath, mind, eye, ear and other faculties into the heart, along with their cosmic counterparts. Whatever we trace to its origins takes us back to the heart, whether it is the thought-current, the breath-current, the current of speech, the current of attention through listening (the ears), or the place of focus of perception (through the eye). This return to the heart is the return to our true origin and to the Self. It is our real journey home to immortality where our True Being ever abides. This *Hridaya-Vidya*, expressed in this manner, can be used to combine and fulfill all other yogic approaches and all of our spiritual striving. ▲

BHAGAVAN'S HANDWRITING

BHAGAVAD GITA

When devotees composed verses in praise of Bhagavan or translated spiritual texts they showed their efforts to Bhagavan who meticulously went through the writings and corrected any mistakes. Over the years Chadwick submitted to Bhagavan his English translations of Bhagavan's selections from the *Bhagavad Gita* and other compositions. We are fortunate in this because now we have some rare examples of Bhagavan's script in English and can observe with fascination the changes Bhagavan made.

We have expanded the manuscript to the maximum extent possible from pages 30 to 36.

Selections from the

BHAGAVAD-GITA

made by Sri Ramana Maharishi.

1. Sanjaya said:
To him who was with pity overcome
With smarting, brimming eyes, despondent, thus
Madhusûdana spake to him these words: 11. 1.

2. Bhagavan said:
This body that ye see the Field is called,
And that which knoweth it the Sages call
The Knower of the Field, O Kunti's son. X111. 1.

3. Knower of Field in all the Fields, know Me.
~~Knowledge of~~ ^{of it}
~~Wisdom as to the~~ Field and Knower too,
~~True Knowledge that in my opinion is.~~
~~That is in my opinion true Wisdom.~~ X111. 11.

3. Knower of Field in all the Fields, know Me.
~~Knowledge of~~ ^{of it}
~~Wisdom as to the~~ Field and Knower too,
~~True Knowledge that in my opinion is.~~
~~That is in my opinion true Wisdom.~~ X111. 11.

4. 'T is I, O Gudâkesha, am the SELF
Seated within the Heart of everyone,
Of all I am Beginning, Middle, End. X. 20.

5. For death is certain for all creatures born
And birth is certain for all those who die,
Therefore thou should'st not grieve for what must be.
11. 27.

6. He is not born, nor dies, nor having been
Ceaseth he evermore to be; unborn,
Abiding, everlasting, ancient too,
He is not slain ~~when~~ ^{the} body ~~has been~~ ^{being} killed. 11. 20.

7. Uncleaveable and incombustible,
And neither to be wetted nor be dried,
Perpetual, all-pervasive, stable too,
Immovable, from everlasting He. 11. 24.

8. For know that THAT is indestructible
Whom all this doth pervade. There is no one
Who can destroy th' imperishible One. 11. 17.

9. The unreal hath no being; and the real
Doth never cease to be; the truth of both
By seers of ~~the Essence~~ ^{Reality} has been seen. 11. 16.

10. As omnipresent ether is not touched
By reason of its subtlety, so too
The SELF is not ~~affected~~ ^{touched either} as it dwells
~~Throughout~~ ^{Within} the body, seated everywhere. Xl11. 32.

11. There the Sun lightens not, nor moon, nor fire;
Having gone thither they return no more;
This is of me the one (Supreme Abode) XV. 6.

12. And this unmanifested One is called
"The Indestructible", the highest ~~Path~~ ^{Place}.
Those reaching It will never more return,
This is of me the one (Supreme Abode) Vll11.. 21

13. Without ~~deceit or~~ ^{or delusion,} pride, victors ~~they~~
Over attachment, dwelling e'er in SELF,
With pacified desire, free from the "Pairs"
Of pain and pleasure, from delusion free,
~~They~~ ^{place} to the ~~home~~ immutable do go. XV. 5.

14. He who the Scriptures' ordinance forsakes
And followeth the promptings of desire,
Attaineth not perfection, happiness,
Nor doth he gain unto the highest goal.
XV1. 23.

15. Seated within all beings equally
The Supreme Lord, unperishing within
The perishing - he who sees ~~thus~~ ^{Him}, he sees.
Xl11. 27.

16. But by devotion unto Me alone
~~This way in essence may be seen~~
~~I thus may be perceived, O Arjuna,~~
And known and ~~seen in essence~~, entered too, ^{O Arjuna}.
Xl. 54.

17. The faith of each to his own nature's shaped;
Man is instinct with faith, O Bhārata;
Wherein his faith so verily is he. XV11. 3.

18. The man intent on faith doth ~~Wisdom~~ ^{Knowledge} gain,
Also that one with senses held in check;
~~Wisdom~~ ^{Knowledge} obtained, ~~to~~ ^{he} Peace ~~he~~ ^{doth} swiftly ~~gains~~ ^{gain}.
1V. 39.

19. To these, e'er tranquil, worshipping in love,
~~The yoga of enquiry I vouchsafe,~~
~~I give the yoga which discriminates,~~
By which they come ~~eventually~~ to Me, ^{O Bhārata}. X. 10.

20. From pure compassion, dwelling in their SELF,
By shining lamp of ~~Wisdom~~ ^{Knowledge} I destroy
Their darkness which ~~by~~ ^{from} ignorance is born. X. 11.

21. Truly, in whom ~~unwisdom~~ ^{ignorance} is destroyed
By ~~wisdom~~ ^{Knowledge} of the SELF, ~~wisdom~~ ^{Knowledge} in them,
~~Shining as Sun,~~ Discloses the Supreme ^{shining like Sun}.
V. 16.

22. The senses are called great, greater ^{the mind,} ~~than them~~
~~The mind,~~ Greater than mind ~~Reason,~~ ^{the Understanding} ~~is~~
 But what ^{Understanding} ~~I~~han Reason greater ^{far} ~~is,~~ is HE. 111. 42.

23. ~~From~~ ^{higher} Knowing Him ^{Understanding} than Reason ~~greater~~ far,
~~And, fettering up~~ ^{the} ~~Restraining self~~ by SELF, ~~One might armed,~~
 Slay thou the enemy that ~~can at will~~ ^{is darker,}
~~Alter its shape, which is~~ ^{is darker,} ~~Too hard to reach,~~ ^{is darker,} ~~One might armed.~~
 111. 43.

24. As burning fire of fuel ashes makes
 So doth the fire of ^{Knowledge} ~~Wisdom~~, Arjuna,
 Reduce all actions unto ashes too.
 1V. 37.

25. Those works are free from moulding of desire,
^{by fire of Knowledge}
 Whose actions ~~are~~ burned up, ~~by Wisdom's fire,~~
 That person ^{has} ~~one~~ ^{designate} ~~a Sage.~~
 1V. 19.

26. ^{But} The ~~Power~~ of the ETERNAL enfolds those
 Who know themselves, weaned from desire and wrath,
 Subdued in nature and subdued in thought.
 V. 26.

27. Little by little let him peace obtain
^{Understanding} ~~By Reason's means~~ ^{attained;} ~~by steadiness controlled;~~
 Having made mind within the SELF abide
 Let him not think of anything at all. VI. 25.

28. ^{Wherever} ~~As oft as~~ the unsteady, wavering mind
 Outward projects, ^{withdraw it from that place,} ~~so often rein it in,~~
 And lead it under sway of SELF alone. VI. 26.

29. With senses, mind and Reason e'er controlled
 The Sage, on Liberation solely bent,
 Having for ever cast away desire,
 With fear and wrath, in truth has Freedom V. 28.

30. ^{one} The ~~self~~, by yoga harmonized, doth see
 The SELF dwelling in all and all in SELF;
 And looks on everything impartially. VI. 29.

31. To those people who worship Me alone
 Thinking of no one else, harmonious e'er,
^{For} ~~To~~ them I ^{undertake} ~~bring the power~~ to gain and guard. 1X. 22.

32. Of these the wise ^{One ever} ~~constantly~~ harmonized
 And worshipping the One, is best of all;
 I am supremely dear to the Wise One
 And the Wise One supremely dear to Me. VII. 17.

33. At close of many births he who is full
^{Knowledge} ~~Of Wisdom~~ ^{worships} ~~cometh unto~~ me, ^{Thinking the while} ~~and says,~~
 "Vasudeva is all," Mahatma he,
 Such is indeed most difficult to find. VII. 19.

34. When one gets rid of all the mind's desires
And is contented in the SELF by SELF,
Then is he called one of a stable mind. 11. 55.

35. Whoso forsaketh all desires and goes
~~Upon his way every~~
~~Forward from yearnings free, and knows that Mine~~
~~Bevoid of "I" and "mine"~~
~~And I am naught at all~~ - he ~~comes to~~ Peace achieves
11. 71.

36. That man ^{by whom} ~~from~~ the world ^{is not persecuted} ~~shrinks not away~~
~~Nor by the world's perturbed,~~
~~The shrinks not from the world,~~ free from the cares
Of anger, joy and fear, is dear to Me.
XII. 15.

37. The same in honour, ignominy too,
The same to friend and foe, abandoning
All undertakings: - he is said to have
Gone quite beyond all the three qualities.
XIV. 25.

38. But that man who rejoices in the SELF
With SELF is satisfied, with SELF content,
For him in truth there's nothing more to do.
111. 17.

39. ~~For him there is no interest in things done~~
~~Or by inaction, and he has no need~~
~~In this world, nor again in things not done,~~
~~For aught of his depends on any being~~ ^{from} ~~anything to ask.~~
111. 18.

40. Content with all he without effort gets,
Free from the "Pairs", from envy also free,
Balanced in failure and in success too,
Though acting he by action is not bound.
IV. 22.

41. The Lord dwells in the Heart of everyone
Causing by His illusive Power them all
To spin ^{like marionettes upon a} ~~around as on a potter's~~ wheel. XV111. 61.

42. To Him for shelter flee with all thy ^{heart} ~~soul~~,
By His grace peace supreme thou shalt obtain,
Which is the everlasting dwelling-place. XV111. 62.

BHAGAVAN'S HERBAL REMEDIES

ASWAGANDHI CHURNAM

Ingredients required:

English	Tamil
Clove — 10 grammes	<i>lavangam</i>
Sirunagappu — 20 grammes	<i>sirunagappu</i>
Cardamom — 40 grammes	<i>elakkai (illaichi)</i>
Black Pepper — 80 grammes	<i>karuppu milagu</i>
Rice Pippali — 160 grammes	
Dry Ginger — 320 grammes	<i>shukku</i>
Withania — 640 grammes	<i>asvagandhi</i> root
Sugar Candy — 1280 grammes	<i>kalkandu</i>

One can easily see that the quantity of the ingredients increases by multiples of two. This is again a speciality of Bhagavan Ramana. In ancient medicinal books the prescription for this particular recipe does not contain as many ingredients and certainly not their proportionate increase.

Method of Preparing:

Clean the ingredients well, powder them and mix them well. This is a medicine for general vitality, strength and vigour. It is also reputed to cure many diseases, even complicated ones. Dr. Manikkam, a practising Siddha and Ayurveda physician, who lives in Tiruvannamalai and whose mother was fortunate to learn many medicinal recipes from Sri Bhagavan himself, says that, for a good part of his practice, he prescribes the above medicine and has found that it gives excellent results. ▲





Alan Chadwick came to Sri Ramanasramam in 1935 and soon after was given permission to build a house within the precincts of the ashram. Chadwick was the only Westerner among the few people who had this privilege. Bhagavan later remarked that Chadwick had been 'one of us', and the following years demonstrated Chadwick's unwavering loyalty towards Bhagavan and the ashram.

The photo shows the housewarming ceremony of Chadwick's cottage in 1936. Bhagavan can be seen inside the thatched enclosure along with the Sarvadhikari of the ashram Sri Niranjanananda Swami, Chadwick himself and on the right, S. S. Cohen (in white) with his hand on his forehead and next to him Paul Brunton with coat.



Destiny and Freewill

P. SRIDHARAN

FOR spiritual aspirants like us, whichever path we traverse, there are certain vexatious questions that bother us. These questions are fundamental and defy easy answers or solutions, for the simple reason that there can be any number of arguments for or against any particular answer or solution. One such puzzling issue is the role and influence of destiny and freewill in our lives. Perhaps most spiritual aspirants will agree that both destiny and freewill have a role in our life. But what should be our attitude towards life in view of the effects of destiny and to what extent can we exercise our freewill? Where do we draw the line? I think all of us would have faced this dilemma at crucial stages in our life. Though scriptural texts have tried to answer these questions, aspirants like us face problems in understanding the purport of these statements and actually trying to put them into practice.

To try to solve a fundamental problem, it is necessary for us to understand the problem itself, to go to the very root of it. If we search for an answer that would satisfy our own mind, the problem will certainly not be solved.

Newton's third law of motion states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. It thus follows that science has

understood and accepted the law of *karma* or destiny at least as far as the physical aspects of life are concerned. However, science has failed to explore whether there could be any possibility of the physical law being applied to the realm of consciousness. Science, therefore, is as yet unwilling to accept the effects of destiny, and the end and natural result of actions. If the physical side of life has to obey certain cardinal principles and can be subject to reaction and destiny, obviously the psychological side should also be subject to certain laws and destiny.

According to Hindu religious lore, the entire universe is a divine drama in which each of us is allotted our respective role to play. The Lord, Ishvara, is the ultimate authority who decides on the effects and fruits of individual *karma*. Apparently we do not have much to choose other than play our allotted roles in life well, without desire and dedicating the fruits of our actions to the Lord. All scriptures recommend this course. But does this happen? Hardly. It is easier said than done and it seems more so in the case of spiritual aspirants.

Now let us try to find out what destiny actually is and how it affects us. All of us have desires. Desire arises out of attachment towards kith and kin, towards our work and our possessions. The source of desire is thought itself. A thought creates sensation, sensation creates desire, desire creates motive and the will to choose among what is available, and the will to possess the object of desire. We work towards the fulfilment of our desires and expect adequate returns for our efforts. When we desire an object we never think of the doer. We are not aware of the Self during the operation of a desire. It is only the mind that is feverishly at work. We want to desperately possess the object. Without putting our heart and soul into the task at hand, into doing our duty as best as possible, we worry about its consequences, the results that it might bring. We want to succeed but we do not know whether we will succeed, whether we will be rewarded or not. Fear of failure dominates our thoughts. Between the accomplishment of our work and the time when the action bears fruit, is a time of great anxiety. There is no peace. Whether we want to build a house or want a promotion or buy a car, the mind works in much the same fashion. It therefore follows that destiny is created

for oneself by one's actions which are in turn born out of thought. Thus thought is the fundamental source of destiny.

We rejoice when we are rewarded, i.e., when we feel that we have been adequately compensated for our efforts. We think that we have achieved great results through our intelligence and efforts. The euphoria lasts until such time as another desire arises in the heart. On the contrary, we are disillusioned and suffer inwardly when seemingly no reward or fruit of our choice or to our liking materialises. Failure in an enterprise leads to emotions like jealousy towards the one who possesses the object of our desire, anger towards the one who might have prevented us from attaining our objective and as a natural consequence, hatred. These emotions hold good not only in respect of objects of desire but also with regard to human relationships. We expect others to listen to us, do what we tell them to do. We know what is best for others. We think that it is we who do things, that we have the choice, that it is within our capabilities to achieve success in whatever we undertake. The sense of *kartritva* (the sense of doership) is very strong and holds us in a vice like grip. All this is the result of our deployment of freewill. The mind, when it exercises freewill, becomes clouded and is not in a

The sense of doership
is very strong
and holds us
in a vice like grip

position to reflect or think clearly. Emotions, whether good or bad, cannot result in right action. Actions resulting out of such emotions invariably lead to results that bring suffering.

Thus, *vasanas* (tendencies) are created and are carried over many births. Sri Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, bemoans the fact that man's difficulties arise out of his egoism. Discussing fundamental problems of life with Sage Vasishtha, Sri Rama says that the mind that seeks enjoyment and fulfilment is like the deer that runs in search of grass not minding the danger of falling into the pit. He says that we spend all our lives like mad men running after useless objects instead of pursuing the highest goal of life, namely Liberation. Even the slightest

thought immerses a man in sorrow says the *Yoga Vasishtha*. This shows that even the high and the mighty are not exempt from the malefic influences of sorrow and suffering. It therefore follows that exercise of freewill results in bondage. Thus, freewill, which is born of thought, is the root of destiny. This then is the crux of the problem.

What do most of us do when caught in this vicious circle? The religious minded among us tend to blame destiny and resign ourselves to our fate. Many of us blame others for our failure. A superstitious person understands destiny as being conducted by some mysterious force that waits by the side of each and every human being with a debit and credit register, recording his good and bad deeds, tallied at the end of each birth and rewarded or punished as the case may be. Most of us have a false or superficial understanding of the problem of destiny.

But when analysed dispassionately, it becomes clear that we alone, because of the exercise of our freewill, are responsible for it. One reaps what one sows. Every human being in this world goes through these experiences, yet, either he does not know the means of freeing himself from this bondage or is so enmeshed in it that he thinks that bondage is part of life and accepts it and learns to live with it, albeit unhappily.

As Sri Bhagavan says in his introduction to Adi Shankara's *Viveka Chudamani*, all human beings without exception want to be happy always. This is borne out by the fact that man searches for happiness in all kinds of external objects and through various ways, be it through entertainment or drink or even through harassing others. Yet, the fact remains that most of us are without a clue as to how eternal happiness can be achieved.

Where is the end to all this? Is it possible to free ourselves out of this entanglement? Each one of us, at least the spiritually inclined, at one point in our life would certainly have asked ourselves, "Where am I going, what am I doing, what is the meaning of my life, my

All human beings
without exception
want to be
happy always

experiences, why do I suffer, why am I not peaceful?" The beginning of this reflection is proof enough that we naturally, perhaps without being consciously aware of it, search for our source. It is evidence of the sprouting of enquiry. This is the result of grace. God's grace or the Sadguru's grace is the ultimate refuge.

Even when we want to pursue a spiritual life, freewill and destiny play an important role. Many devotees of Bhagavan have felt an intense desire to give up family and home and pursue his teachings, preferably at Tiruvannamalai itself. Bhagavan usually discouraged such people, telling them that they could pursue their devotion and spiritual practice wherever they lived. Taking the example of Bhagavan's devotees, over the years, a few have regularly left home, relatives and work to settle down in Tiruvannamalai and pursue their *sadhana*. The decision to give up one's profession and income as also one's near and dear ones is not easy. Bhagavan has repeatedly said that if it were one's destiny to leave one's home, it would certainly happen. The burning desire to leave behind the mundane in pursuit of something higher fructifies in some cases. In such cases freewill and destiny do meet and merge together. But this is very rare and the passion to discover the truth need not include the desire to run away from home. Rather, the wilful urge to leave home is not different from any other desire and is therefore wrong.

Whatever aspect of life, whether the mundane or the altruistic or the intensely spiritual, and whichever way one looks at it, one finds that freewill and destiny affect it and make one unhappy for the simple reason that freewill is the cause of destiny.

What other way remains for us than surrender to the Lord or finding out the root cause of all this through Self-enquiry? As one proceeds sincerely on the path of enquiry as taught by Bhagavan coupled with true devotion and surrender, one finds oneself reluctant to employ freewill in day to day life and as a result one can also subtly feel destiny slipping away from us. If this is not the Sadguru's grace, what is? ▲



Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam

SADHU OM

Verse 2

English Paraphrase

O Red Hill [Arunachala]! All this [world-appearance], which is a picture, rises, stands and subsides only in You. Since You dance eternally [in] the Heart as 'I' [the real Self], they [the sages or *jnanis*] say that Your name itself is Heart (*hridayam*).

Commentary

In the previous verse Sri Bhagavan revealed that by the all-pervasive effulgence of its Grace, Arunachala swallows the entire world-appearance. In this verse, by alluding to the cinema simile by which he used to explain the appearance of the world, Sri Bhagavan gives a clue to the reason why the world-appearance is swallowed by the light of Grace. Just as the appearance and disappearance of a cinema picture takes place only on the screen, so the rising (creation), the standing (sustenance) and the subsidence (destruction) of the entire world-picture takes place only in Arunachala, the real Self. Without Arunachala as a base, the world-picture could not have manifested even its seeming rising, standing and subsidence. But Arunachala is not merely the screen on which this world-picture appears and disappears.

“... The picture of names and forms, the seen, the screen and the light – all these are He, who is the Self.”¹

The world-picture can appear on the screen of Self only when the light of Self appears diffused and dim in the form the mind-light. But when the light of Self shines in all its fullness, it swallows the appearance of both the world-picture and the seer of that picture. “When the mind comes out from Self, the world appears. Therefore when the world appears, Self does not appear; when the Self appears (shines), the world does not appear,” says Sri Bhagavan in *Nan Yar?* This experience of his is clearly revealed in these first two verses.

Though the world-picture, the seer of that picture, the screen on which the picture is seen, and the light which illumines the picture are all only Arunachala, who is the Self, Arunachala is not the active cause (*nimitta karanam*) for the appearance of the world. This is made clear by Sri Bhagavan in verse 85 of *Guru Vachaka Kovai*:

“Though Self itself is seen as the world of many names and forms, it is not the doer, acting as the cause which creates, sustains and destroys the world.”

This is why in this verse Sri Bhagavan says the world-picture “rises, stands and subsides in You” (*ninpal*)² and not “by you” (*ninnale*). The efficient cause or *nimitta karana* of the world-appearance is only the mind, which is a dim and diffused light that seemingly comes into existence due to Self-forgetfulness. When the clear and unlimited light of Self-knowledge shines forth, it swallows the dim mind-light together with its effect, the world-appearance. In other words, to express it figuratively, so long as the lotus-bud of the mind remains closed, in the darkness caused by that closure the world-picture can rise and subside; but when the mind-lotus blossoms open by the Grace of Arunachala, the clear light of Self-consciousness

¹ *Ulladu Narpadu* verse 1.

² ‘pal’ = place or ‘idam’; thus ‘ninpal’ (nin+ pal) = ‘ninnidam’ (in You).

floods in and pervades it entirely, thereby swallowing the world-picture.

Since Arunachala is thus the bright fire of *jnana* which burns all the worlds to ashes, Sri Bhagavan refers to it here as the Red Hill (*sem-malai*). Though to the gross extroverted attention Arunachala appears as a hill of insentient rock, it is in fact the Lord who stands as a mass of *Jnana* (*jnana-tiralay nindra peruman*)³ ever shining in the heart as the self-luminous light of the consciousness ‘I’.

So long as the mind is not swallowed by the bright light of Arunachala, the Red Hill, the appearance of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world continue. However, though these seeming changes of creation, sustenance and dissolution take place only in Arunachala, Arunachala exists

externally without undergoing or being affected in the least by any of these seeming changes, dancing motionlessly in the Heart and as the Heart in the form of the pure and adjunctless consciousness ‘I’.

Since You dance eternally
in the Heart as ‘I’,
they say that Your name
itself is Heart

That is why Sri Bhagavan says in the second half of this verse, “Since You dance eternally in the Heart as ‘I’, they say that Your name itself is Heart”.

Thus Sri Bhagavan clearly reveals that the true nature of Arunachala as experienced by those whose mind-lotus has blossomed fully, is only the eternal shining of ‘I’ in the Heart. Though this ‘I’, which is called by sages as the Heart, is experienced in its purity and full clarity only by those whose mind-lotus has blossomed, it is in fact shining eternally, both when the mind and the world-picture appear and when they are swallowed.

Though it is said that this ‘I’ is shining or dancing in the Heart, in truth the Heart is not a place but the Self itself. Therefore what is

³ “Jnana-tiralay nindra peruman” are the opening words of a song sung by Tirujnanasambandar on Arunachala.

called the 'Heart' and the Self which shines as 'I' are not two different things, but are one and the same reality. To make this truth clear, Sri Bhagavan concludes this verse by singing, "They say that your name itself is Heart". In this context Sri Bhagavan would sometimes refer to the *Chandogya Upanishad* [8.8.3], where it is said, "This *atman* verily is in the Heart...hence it is the Heart..." And to the *Brahma Gitai* 6.10, where it is said, "Due to his benevolently existing and shining as the special knowledge in each heart, which appear diverse, they call God Himself as the Heart..." To whom does Sri Bhagavan refer here as 'they' (*tam*)? Only to those sages whose mind-lotus has blossomed. In the outlook of those sages there is no 'in' or 'out', no 'time' or 'place', no 'appearance' or 'disappearance'; there is only the one non-dual reality which ever shines as 'I am' and which is known by various names such as Self, God, Heart and Arunachala.

Leaving the subject
of this 'I',
he knows that
there is nothing
worthy to know
or write about

Thus in this second verse also Sri Bhagavan talks only about 'I'. Therefore from these first two verses it is clear that if anyone prompts Sri Bhagavan to write something without giving any subject, the one subject which he will write about is only 'I'. Why? Because in his experience there is nothing more important than this. Leaving the subject of this 'I', he knows that there is nothing worthy to know or write about.

"Without knowing oneself what is the use if one knows anything else? If one knows oneself, then what else will exist to be known? ..." sings Sri Bhagavan in verse 3 of *Atma Vidya Kirtanam*.

All right, then what is the means to attain knowledge of the real nature of 'I' as a direct experience? The principle and direct means is only Self-enquiry, which is the path of *jnana*. Therefore in the next verse Sri Bhagavan takes up the subject of Self-inquiry and reveals both the method of practice and the result of that practice. Thereaf-

ter in the last two verses, in accordance with the request of Ganapati Sastri, Sri Bhagavan touches upon the subjects of *yoga*, *bhakti* and *karma*.

But even while dealing with these subjects, he does not leave his central theme of 'I'. How? Though in the fourth verse he makes a passing mention about restraining the breath, and though he uses the words *dhyani* (meditating) and '*yogi*', he makes clear in that verse that breath-restraint is only a means to make the mind stand still, that what is then to be meditated upon by that stilled mind is only Arunesa, who is the non-objectifiable reality which shines in the heart as 'I' when attention to all external objects is given up, and that only he who thus unites his mind with the Self is the real yogi. Then in the fifth verse, in which he deals with the subjects of *bhakti* and *karma*, from the opening words "with a mind surrendered to You" he makes clear that the real *bhakta* or *karma yogi* is only he who no longer retains the mind. Having thus surrendered his mind, the real *bhakta* has drowned in Self as Self, thereby losing completely his separate individuality.

Thus the base on which Sri Bhagavan deals with all these subjects is only 'I'. ▲

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

This is a faithful reproduction of the notebook of B. V. Narasimha Swami. We have retained, wherever possible, the original grammar and punctuation.

Ragavachariar 26/3/1930.

Supervisor

PWD

I went and saw Maharshi off and on. It would usually be crowded and I was loath to ask him anything in the midst of such a crowd. One evening in 1911, I went to see him with three questions in my mind and the *Bhagavad Gita* in hand.

i. As I do not wish to put questions before crowd, will you please appoint a time when I may question you in private.

ii. As I am a theosophist, I should like to have your opinion on the Theosophical Society.

iii. (Like Arjuna questions Sri Krishna in Ch.XI of the *Gita*) If you think I can behold your *swarupa*, will you please enable me to see it.

When I went that evening, there was a crowd of some forty people before him and I asked none of the questions. But in a few minutes the crowd dispersed, one after another, taking leave and going away. I was overjoyed.

My first question had been answered.

As for the second, Maharshi himself asked me if the book in hand was *Bhagavad Gita*. I said, 'yes'. I had not told him what the book was or showed it to him previously.

He also told me, "You are a theosophist, the Society is doing good work". This opinion is what I wanted to elicit from him. I had not opened my mouth to ask him and yet he answered my second mental query.

Now for the most important matter, I opened my mouth and put the question to him. "If you think I can see your *svarupam*, please enable me to see it." Then I sat near him in silence. In a very short time, his figure disappeared from my view. Behind him was painted the figure of Dakshinamurti on the wall. That figure also disappeared. I had only darkness or nothing before my eyes. I still looked on. In a short while a bright cloud covered the place occupied by Maharshi as Dakshinamurti. There was at first nothing but the cloud. Gradually there appeared something like sunlight from behind the cloud and shading the edge of the cloud with silver from behind and illuminating the body of the cloud also to some extent. My vague outlines of the cloud gradually became more definite. The silver line became thicker. The cloud gradually assumed the outlines of Maharshi's body. Then again the eyes and nose and other features gradually appeared therein. Similarly Dakshinamurti's picture also disappeared. Maharshi's body was still in that bright cloudy shape. It was growing every instant brighter and brighter. I could not endure the intense light and therefore closed my eyes. After a while I reopened my eyes to see the familiar face of the Maharshi and the wall with Dakshinamurti painted on it next to him.

I could not speak any further. I sat awhile, then took leave and went away. For a month or more I did not go uphill again. I was wondering at the vision granted to me and queried myself as to what its full and exact import was. I got no satisfactory explanation of all this and at last went up the hill to get Maharshi's explanation. I told him all the facts. He then said "You wanted to see my *swarupa*. What form (*rupam*) have I? That is why you saw a blank darkness at

first. Nothing with form is true. It is only by getting past form that you arrive at the truth. The first stage of your enquiry is to ascertain what you are not by a series of *neti, neti* (not this, not this). That is why a blank appeared first and then light — a vague diffused light without distinction of parts and without any outline.

“As for what followed, you barely produced what you had derived from Ch XI of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

“As for this sort of vision of me Kavyakanta Ganapati Sastri had a similar vision, you can ask him for further explanation.” I did not go and ask Ganapati Sastri. In 1912 I left this place on transfer and returned to duty here only a year ago.

In 1911, when I was constantly seeing Maharshi, my wife and others were afraid that my old disposition towards *vairagya*m would mature into *sanyasa*m by constant visits to Maharshi and so they went and expressed their fears to Maharshi and requested him to tell me to remain with my family. So, when I went to Mahashi next, he told me that contact with *samsara* or family is not got over by voluntarily giving it up. A walking stick that supports a man is kept on by him, but when he is asleep, the stick falls off, of itself. He also referred to *trinajalouka*¹ as showing that the mind or soul should firmly grasp something higher before the hold on the lower is given up.

Once I joined him when he was in the course of a *giri pradakshinam*. Maharshi and others were near the tank near Adi Annamalai. I took meals along with forty others. After his return to the hill, people wanted to invite him to each of their houses. I asked Him, “Why should not Maharshi help the ignorant masses by giving instruction, by means of lectures and educating the public thereby?” He replied, “Is not God working? Is he making speeches? Can work be done only through speech? Do you know the amount of work that can be silently turned out — without any speech?” I said yes.

I constantly went to him, in my mind as also externally.

¹ *trina* = a blade of grass; *jalaauka* = a leech. When the leech moves from one blade of grass to another, it first grasps the second one and only then leaves the first blade of grass. Sri Bhagavan alludes to this by way of example. ▲

Padamalai

The Heart

MURUGANAR

Padamalai is a 3,059 verse Tamil poem that Muruganar composed sometime after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi. The original verses were published a few years ago in volume nine of Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham. The majority of the verses in Padamalai contain teaching statements that Bhagavan himself made. An English edition of this work, translated by Dr Venkatasubramanian and Robert Butler and edited by David Godman, will be published soon. In the following sequence of verses, which have been taken from this new book, Muruganar records some of Bhagavan's statements on the Heart.

1. ‘The Heart’ and ‘*Atma-swarupa*’ are not different from each other. The difference is only in the words used.

Sri Ramana Gita, chapter five, verses 2, 3 and 5:

That from where all the activities of the embodied beings emerge is mentioned as the Heart. The description of its form is [only] conceptual

It is said that the I-activity is the root of all activities. From where the ‘I’-thought emerges, that, in short, is the Heart.

The Heart is said to be the one different from the lump of flesh and blood. Deriving it as *hrt ayam* [meaning, ‘This is the Heart’] the true form of the Self is indicated.

2. It is the conviction of sages who possess clear knowledge of reality that the *Atma-swarupa* exists as the Heart within the Heart.

Question: Sri Bhagavan speaks of the Heart as the seat of consciousness and as identical with the Self. What does the Heart exactly signify?

Bhagavan: The question about the Heart arises because you are interested in seeking the source of consciousness. To all deep-thinking minds, the enquiry about the 'I' and its nature has an irresistible fascination.

Call it by any name, God, Self, the Heart or the seat of consciousness, it is all the same. The point to be grasped is this, that 'Heart' means the very core of one's being, the centre, without which there is nothing whatever.¹

3. Those are truly wise who drink the flooding honey of *Atma-swarupa*, which shines in the Heart as the Heart, and feel contented.

4. Thinking is imagination. The Heart, thought-free *Atma-swarupa*, is the reality, pure consciousness.

5. When perfection exists as the nature of your Heart, why do you lose your composure by dwelling on imperfections?

6. The Heart is the *jiva-samadhi* where the soul of the true devotee resides forever with bliss-consciousness.

At the end of their lives some yogis take jiva-samadhi, which means that they are buried alive in a samadhi pit, or permanently walled up inside some cave or similar structure. The verse is indicating a state in which the jiva is permanently entombed within the Heart, where it perpetually enjoys the bliss of the Self.

7. It is impossible for a Heart that has realised itself to be the vast expanse of consciousness to be obscured by the thick black darkness of ignorance.

Abiding in the Heart

8. True *jnana*, which bestows the bliss of the Self, will reveal itself in a Heart that, having conquered the ego, remains utterly still.

9. Unless one reaches the Heart and remains established there, it is impossible to destroy agitation of the mind and attain peace.

10. Abiding in the neutral state of equilibrium is reaching and abiding in the Heart through firm awareness of the Self, which is the true *jnana-swarupa*.

11. To exist and shine in the Heart, without any thoughts holding onto you, is *mauna samadhi*, one's own [true] nature.

12. Those things that leave you, let them leave. Instead, know that which abides permanently in the Heart and live in consciousness.

13. Let the good and wise ones embrace as true *tapas* the realisation of the truth in their Heart, and the steadfast abidance as that.

14. The supreme benefit of possessing consciousness is rejoicing in the Heart, experiencing union with the Self.

15. The benefit of true *tapas*, free from illusory appearances, is a Heart that remains uninterruptedly and perpetually full of the true life that abides as consciousness.

Establishing the Mind in the Heart

16. When the mind, through the quality of extreme purity, merges in the Heart, it will attain perfection as peace.

17. If the mind that has become one-pointed, like the tip of *darba* grass, merges with the Heart, the experience of pure being, seemingly impossible to attain, will be very easily discovered.

18. Taking a thick fat crowbar [as a needle], it is not possible to stitch together extremely delicate silk cloth using very fine thread.

Question eleven of *Vichara Sangraham* asks, "Is Self-experience possible for the mind whose nature is constant change?" One part of the answer states:

"...It is only by the mind that is impure and is under the influence of *rajas* and *tamas* that reality, which is very subtle and unchanging, cannot be experienced; just as a piece of fine silk cloth cannot be stitched with a heavy crowbar, or as the details of subtle objects cannot be distinguished by the light of a lamp-flame that flickers in the wind..."

¹ *Maharshi's Gospel*, Book Two Ch 4.

19. Only the Heart deserves to be conquered and possessed, for it gives sovereignty over a country whose produce is indescribable supreme bliss.

20. An unruffled mind established in the Heart is the fence that protects the field of liberation.

21. Restrain yourself in such a way that you reside steadfastly in the Heart, the heavenly expanse of grace whose form is consciousness.

22. Unless the mind is firmly established in the Heart, reality will become veiled by the falsehood that is the mind.

Question: How long can the mind stay or be kept in the Heart?

Bhagavan: The period extends by practice.

Question: What happens at the end of the period?

Bhagavan: The mind returns to the present normal state. Unity in the Heart is replaced by variety of phenomena perceived. This is called the outgoing mind. The Heart-going mind is called the resting mind.²

23. To attain the life of true bliss, which is your very nature, firmly establish yourself in the Heart and abide immovably there.

24. The truth of oneself that exists and shines in the Heart as one's own nature becomes veiled by a mind that is full of delusion.

25. Immerse yourself in the Heart and dwell there, so that you remain beyond reproach, untroubled by the crashing waves of the mind.

Bhagavan: To see the objects the reflected light of the mind is necessary. To see the Heart it is enough that the mind is turned towards it. Then the mind loses itself and the Heart shines forth.³

26. To whatever extent you dive with a one-pointed mind within the Heart, to that extent you will experience bliss.

27. [In so doing] the vexation of the clamorous and exceedingly cruel ego ghost, the mind, will perish, leaving not a trace. ▲

² *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk no. 27.

³ *Ibid.*, Talk no. 99.

Self-Enquiry and the Spiritual Heart

PATRICK ROBERTS

IS concentrating on the spiritual heart (*hridaya*) on the right side of the chest an integral part of self-enquiry? Is it a complementary practice? Or is there no connection between them? The writing of Arthur Osborne is particularly relevant to this interesting but difficult and neglected question.

Arthur Osborne published *The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi in his Own Words* in 1962. Having first considered self-enquiry in chapter 5 in the next chapter entitled Other Methods he turns his attention to concentration on the heart-centre. The term concentration is used here in its normal sense of attempting to fix or focus the mind exclusively on one thing. It is clear that Arthur Osborne regarded this practice as an aid in stilling the mind, complementary but not integral to self-enquiry. That is why he wrote about it in a separate chapter from self-enquiry. He equates concentrating on the spiritual heart with the yogic practice of concentrating on the space between the eyebrows by writing about them under one heading. Other such meditative practices could include breath control, recitation of

mantras, concentration on sound etc. These help to quieten the mind temporarily but only self-enquiry can bring about its permanent dissolution. For most of us they are a necessary preparation for self-enquiry that is after all only possible when the mind is relatively calm. At an advanced stage they drop away.

Arthur Osborne's earlier book *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* dates from 1954. At that time he thought that concentrating on the heart-centre was always to be concurrent with self-enquiry, its 'physical' aspect. In chapter 14 entitled Upadesa he writes in reference to self-enquiry that "The instruction was to sit in meditation, asking 'Who am I?' at the same time focussing the attention on the heart, not the physical organ on the left side of the chest but the spiritual heart on the right. According to the nature of the questioner, Sri Bhagavan would lay stress first on the physical or the mental aspect, the concentration on the Heart or the question 'Who am I?'". He also writes that he heard vichara 'explicitly enjoined, together with concentration on the heart, on all who asked the way.' This does not accord with any of the Sri Ramana literature that I have read and is in my opinion unique. I cannot recall reading anywhere that Sri Ramana ever actually told anyone to concentrate on the heart-centre.* However, I suspect that the attention of most people who attempt self-enquiry is drawn to it whether deliberately or not. Answer 9 of Who am I? begins, "That which rises as 'I' in this body is the mind. If one enquires as to where in the body the thought 'I' rises first, one would discover that it rises in the heart. That is the

* Apparently Bhagavan did speak about focussing attention on the right side of the chest and according to Katya (Kitty) Osborne who was present in the Old Hall along with her parents at the time, he spoke at considerable length about the technique and benefits of the practice. It seems that Sri HWL Poonja may have been present during that discussion or on another occasion. In about 1984, I myself asked Mrs Lucia Osborne about it and she replied that, yes, Bhagavan did mention it but it was not the principal practice and had value only for those so inclined to assist in focussing their attention. See also *A Sadhu's Reminiscences* by A. W. Chadwick, p. 96, 1994 edn.— Editor.

place of the mind's origin. Even if one thinks constantly 'I', 'I', one will be led to that place."

Sri Ramana said that self-enquiry is suitable only for "ripe souls. The rest should follow different methods according to the state of their minds".¹ Distaste for the impermanent body, sense objects and worldly pleasures are signs of fitness for self-enquiry.² He always maintained that meditation (*dhyana*) was a mental activity whereas enquiry (*vichara*) is thought-free abidance in the Self so self-enquiry only really starts once the mind is already more or less quiescent. The Self can be a misleading term because as a substantive it suggests that it is an entity whereas it is a state, our natural state of being, our essence. One can then suppose that the Self has to be 'realized' as though it were an object to be discovered or revealed. The Self is blissful absolute consciousness, more subtle even than simply 'being conscious of being conscious' since ultimately there is no individual to experience consciousness and hence not even the slightest division. One cannot define consciousness except to say that it is exceedingly subtle energy.

Sri Ramana used the term concentration in a completely different way from normal usage so that for him it is not a mental power as commonly understood but in fact quite the opposite. Rather than thinking of one thing (concentrating) it is excluding all thoughts as far as possible. It is in this sense that self-enquiry involves 'concentration'. It is a deep sense of pure being whereby 'concentrating' on the unconditioned consciousness in which everything takes place means that the contents are ignored or eliminated. 'Concentrating' on the 'I'-thought is introverting the mind in order to seek and finally merge in its source, the Self. "There is no investigation into the Atman. The investigation can only be into the non-self".³ Sri Ramana said so frequently that we should

¹ *Spiritual Instruction*, II, 2. See also *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 1985 ed., p. 245.

² See *Ramana Gita*, VII, 8-11 and *Spiritual Instruction*, I, 2.

³ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 78.

find out where the 'I'-thought arises that the self-enquiry question could equally as well be 'Whence am I?' as 'Who am I?' Arthur Osborne writes that this connects concentrating on the spiritual heart with self-enquiry but not as a mental process.⁴ The ambiguity lies in the use of the term concentration as mentioned above.

We should also be careful as Sri Sadhu Om points out in his *The Path of Sri Ramana* Part One. "Some others....try to concentrate on the right side of the chest (where they imagine something as a spiritual heart), expecting a reply such as 'I am from here!'"⁵ He also states that the aim "when seeking the rising-place of the ego is the annihilation of that ego and not an experience of a place in the body."⁶ In conversations Sri Ramana responded to people to suit their capacity and temperament. When asked by Dr Syed, "Should I meditate on the right chest in order to meditate on the Heart?" he answered, "The Heart is not physical. Meditation should not be on the right or the left. Meditation should be on the Self."⁷ Dr Syed had the priceless good fortune to receive guidance directly from Bhagavan by his infinite grace. The question was posed in such a way that the reply discouraged searching for the formless Self in the physical body.

To the best of my knowledge Sri Ramana was the first sage ever to reveal his own experience of the spiritual heart. Surely that is a major revelation. This does not of course mean that the Self is limited to or by it. If the Self were confined to a physical location it would die when the body dies! Yet from a relative point of view the Self can be said to have a location in the body but not from an absolute one.⁸ As Shiva is to Arunachala so the Self is to the spiritual heart. Sri Ramana called it a dynamo⁹ and said that experience of it is the prelude to realization.¹⁰ Sri Ramana does not of course say how

⁴ *The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* (1971 ed.), Arthur Osborne, p 127.

⁵ *The Path of Sri Ramana Part One* by Sadhu Om, p. 107, 1971 edn.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁷ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 273.

⁸ *Sri Ramana Gita*, II, 4.

⁹ *Guru Ramana*, S. S. Cohen, p 82.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 83.

long this "foretaste of realisation"¹¹ lasts before it is final and permanent (*sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi*). It could be many years as for the vast majority of people liberation at death (*videhamukti*) is far more likely than liberation while alive (*jivanmukti*). Whether it is an essential prelude is a fascinating question that I am not qualified to answer. Possibly not as it is amazing that the existence of the spiritual heart does not seem to be known or is not revealed in other traditions. One can experience it without being a jnani but as for vice versa who can say? Not surprisingly this issue never seems to have been addressed anywhere.

It seems that the spiritual heart manifests as a powerful pulsation that can be felt physically so that it is not a question of 'concentrating' on it but of being taken over by it. Sri Ramana called it *atma* or *aham sphurana*, saying that *sphurana* means throbbing or shining.¹² It is often translated as 'the effulgence of the Self' but "the light of the 'I-I'" is better. *Atma sphurana* probably comes about by grace rather than by meditating on the heart-centre. Sri Ramana said, "The state in which it [the mind] inheres in the Self and shines as the Self is termed *aham sphurana* or the pulsation of the Self. This is not something apart from the Self; it is a sign of the forthcoming realization of the Self".¹³ Again, "If the mind be fixed on the *sphurana* and one senses it continuously and automatically it is realisation."¹⁴ But for most people even if *atma sphurana* is consciously experienced such a degree of 'concentration' is impossible as their *vasanas* are so strong that the mind is continually externalised.

Sri Ramana said that the opening of the heart-centre is the size of a pinprick. He described how reflected consciousness flows from it to the *sahasrara chakra* and thence to the entire body. Everybody knows intuitively that it is the centre of their being which is why universally people point to their chest to indicate themselves rather

¹¹ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 62.

¹² *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, dated 24-3-45 afternoon.

¹³ *Self-Enquiry*, Chapter II.

¹⁴ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 62.

than to their physical heart, head or stomach! It is referred to in the *Sitopanishad*, *Mahanarayana Upanishad* and in the *Ashtangahridayam*, a classic Malayalam work of ayurvedic medicine - not that any other authority is needed to prove its existence. Verses 18 and 19 of the *Supplement to the 40 Verses on Reality* which describe the spiritual heart are translations from the *Ashtangahridayam*. Verse 19 says, 'All the great psychic nerves (*nadis*) depend upon it [*hridaya*]. It is the abode of the vital forces (*pranas*), the mind and the light (of consciousness).'

Sri Ganapati Muni truly recognized Venkataraman in 1907 and named him Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. However, he was not an advaitin but a shakta with a liking for *mantra japa*. His great Sanskrit work *Sri Ramana Gita* consists of 300 verses in 18 chapters like the *Bhagavad Gita*. The famous verse 2 of chapter 2 is the only one by Sri Ramana himself and is his first composition in Sanskrit. Sri Ganapati Muni states in the next verse that it contains 'the essence of Vedanta'. Sri Ramana translated it into Tamil and Malayalam and included it as verse 8 in the *Supplement to the 40 Verses on Reality*. It also appears as The Self in the Heart in *The Collected Works*. An English translation is as follows:

"In the centre of the Heart-cave, Brahman shines alone. It is the form of Self experienced as 'I'-'I'. Enter the Heart, through self-enquiry or merging or by breath control and become rooted as that."

The term 'I'-'I' indicates the transcendence of the mesmerising illusion of duality that is objective reality.¹⁵ The debate as to whether Sri Ramana means that there are two or three paths is not relevant to this article. This verse is written in gold letters on the wall behind the stone sofa in the old hall next to the Mother's temple in Sri Ramanasramam. It was inscribed there in Sri Ramana's day and is at the heart of the glorious ashram today. ▲

¹⁵ See *Spiritual Instruction*, Ch. 2 and *Sri Ramana Gita*, Ch. 5 for more on the spiritual heart.

BOOK EXCERPT

The Ramayana: A Modern Translation

RAMESH MENON

From the Author's Introduction

THE RAMAYANA is one of India's two most favourite and enduring legends, the other being the Mahabharata. Millions believe it represents historical fact and worship Rama, prince of Ayodhya, as an incarnation of the God Vishnu. Others see it as a great work of literature, the story of a war between good and evil, and as a cultural document describing a model for ideal behaviour in human society. This book presents the Ramayana as an epic novel set in the forested India of pre-historical times. The Ramayana is the most likely oldest surviving legend in the world.

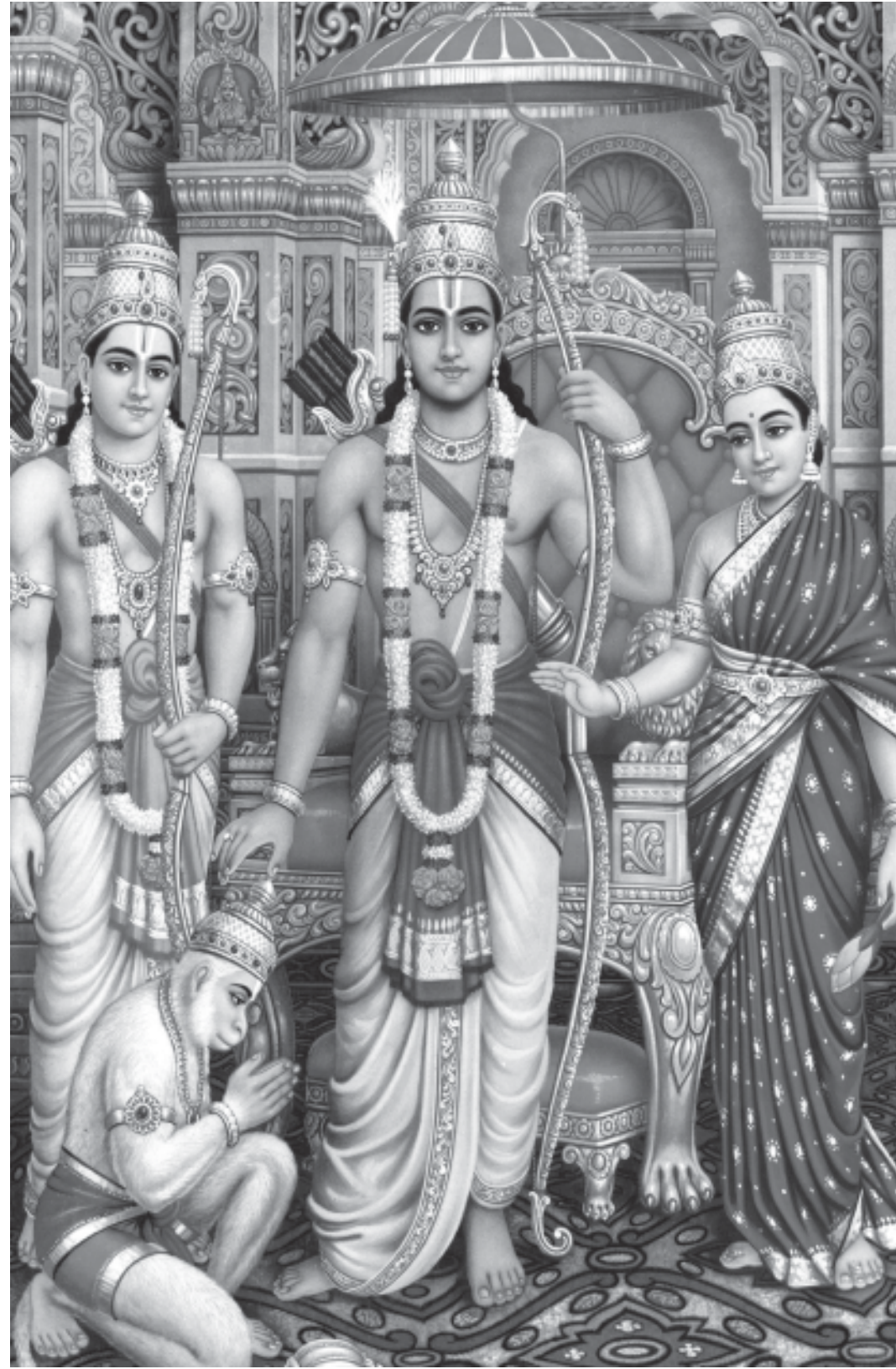
Valmiki first composed the legend as an epic poem, in 24,000 *slokas*, couplets, in high Sanskrit, in a complex meter called the *anushtup*. The *slokas* were grouped into *sargas*, chapters, and these chapters into 7 *kandas*, or sections. *Kanda*, interestingly enough, means an individual phalange of a stick of sugarcane. The first and seventh, the Baala and the Uttara, *kandas* are often believed to be later additions to Valmiki's Ramayana.

The Ramayana was called the *Adi Kavya*, the First Poem of the world. A *kavya* is the work of a *kavi*. In Sanskrit a *kavi* is 'one who sees' — a seer-poet, a visionary. *Kavya* has definitely sacrosanct connotations. Rama, of course, is the hero of the legend, and the *ayana* is his journey, both physical and spiritual; hence, the title, Ramayana, literally means the journey of Rama. They say that Valmiki's epic was first inspired by the God Brahma, the Creator himself. At least four translations of the Ramayana into other Indian vernacular languages are literary classics in their own right: *Iramavatara*, the Tamil Ramayana by the poet Kamban (12th century), the Bengali *Ramayana* of Krittibas Ojha (late 14th century), Tulsidas' *Ramacharitmanas* in Hindi (16th century) and Ezhutthachan's *Aadhyatma* (or spiritual) *Ramayanam* in Malayalam, (also 16th century).

Rama himself is the *Maryada Purushottaman*: the man of perfect honor, the perfect man. He is so perfect that he can only be God incarnate. Yet, being an incarnation, he must suffer like a man before he can prevail over great evil—indeed, precisely because of who he is and his mission, he must suffer more than any other man. More than anything else, reading the Ramayana brings the reader close to the noble, holy and living spirit of Rama. Regardless of which religion one professes, or if one is an agnostic or an atheist, the touch of Rama's spirit is a profound, healing contact.

If Rama is the perfect man, Sita is no less the perfect woman. She suffers at least as much as he does, more. Finally, she very likely proves herself even Rama's superior. The image of the faithful Sita, her immaculate love and devotion for her husband, have flowed down the ages to become unfading symbols of the ideal woman and wife.

The classical Indian artistic tradition is a devotional one, whether in music, literature, dance, painting, sculpture or architecture. The sole object of art is worship, to give praise and to invoke *bhakti*, religious adoration and ecstasy, both in the artist and those that experience his or her work. The purpose of the Ramayana was never less than to awaken the reader spiritually and set him on the great journey that finally, if after many lives, leads to the last goal of all existence—to *moksha*, *nirvana*, the Truth that frees, to God. With-



out exception, the masters of old have said that listening to the Ramayana or reading it exorcises one's sins, from this life and others, and purify one's soul. The concept of *bhakti* is a subtle one—for *bhakti* is an end in itself, and not a means to one. The devotee seeks no more than to find true devotion.

My Ramayana is a novelist's recreation of the legend, but I have taken few liberties with the story or its sequence. Only the language is my own. The book is not based on a Sanskrit text, but on other English versions. Emotionally, my main source was definitely Kamala Subramaniam's work, though I used other texts to verify details of the story as she told it. Personally, I found her book the least dry and the most fervent among all the English retranslations and my debt to her is great.

Given all this, as I began my book I knew that I could not hope to succeed anywhere nearly as well as I would like—to write an English Ramayana that did justice to Maharishi Valmiki's awesome and sacred epic, in these so different times from the ones in which he lived. But as I wrote and rewrote, for ten years, I began to believe that perhaps my inevitable failure was not going to be as dismal as it might. I treated the completion of this book as an act of faith, an offering to Rama.

Excerpted from *The Ramayana: A Modern Retelling of the Great Indian Epic* by Ramesh Menon, published in 2003 by North Point Press, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Originally published in 2001 by Writers Club Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, as *The Ramayana: A Modern Translation*. Copyright (c) 2001 by Ramesh Menon. All rights reserved.

Siva's Bow

With the early sun, Janaka came back to Viswamitra and his party. The king said, 'Through the night, I thought about your presence in my city at this auspicious time. I feel more certain than ever that you have come with a blessing for me. Command me, my lord; how may I serve you?'

Viswamitra replied, 'Perhaps you are right, Janaka, and I have come to you with a blessing. But these princes of Ayodhya, who are

master archers, have come to look at Siva's bow. Let the ayudha be fetched out. It may be that your fortune, like your ancestors', is still bound to it.'

Janaka sat down with them. He said, 'Before we look at Siva's bow, let me tell you how I came to have it. My House is called Videha, and Nimi was a great kshatriya in our line. After Nimi, the sixth king in olden times was Devaratha. It was to Devaratha that the bow was first given, and he was told to keep it safely.

'It happened in the days when Siva's father-in-law, Daksha, held his infamous yagna, to which he did not invite either his daughter Sati or Siva. But Sati went anyway. She did not want to be Daksha's daughter any more, and raising the inner fire of yoga in her body, she made ashes of herself. The devas watched in terror; for in their vanity they had all come to Daksha's sacrifice.

'Siva arrived at that yagna with his army of ganas. He came with his bow in his hand to kill Daksha and the devas. He said, "Sati burnt herself while you watched. I will part your jewelled heads from your bodies!"

'But they fell at his feet, and Mahadeva is easily pacified for his heart is kind. He forgave the devas, and gave Daksha a goat's head in place of the one Virabhadra had hewn from his neck. It was at that time, as if he did not trust himself in his terrible grief, that Siva gave his bow for safekeeping to my ancestor Devaratha. Ever since, the bow has been with us and we have guarded it as our most precious treasure, the root of our fortune.'

Now he paused, and glanced at Viswamitra. The rishi, who knew the best part of the king's story was yet to be told, smiled to encourage him. Janaka brightened as if a hope he held dear had been confirmed. He resumed slowly: he had arrived at the heart of his tale.

The king of Mithila said, 'Some years ago, I was turning the earth for another yagna. Suddenly before my golden plough I saw a child lay on the ground, like a piece of the moon. She lay smiling at me, and my heart would not be still until I had brought her to my wife. We decided to raise her as our daughter.'

Janaka's face lit up. 'We called her Sita because we had found her at the head of the plough, and we soon realized she was no ordinary child. Her devotion to her parents, her uncanny knowledge of people, her compassion, her gentleness and grace, and not least, Muni, her beauty, are not merely of this mortal world.'

He stopped again, and for an instant stared straight at Rama. That prince's heart was on strange, fine fire that he had never known before in his young life. He looked away in mild confusion, while Viswamitra hid a smile.

Now in the tone of sharing a secret, Janaka said, 'To tell you honestly, my friends, in Mithila we think of Sita as an avatara of the Devi Lakshmi. Never before has this kingdom known such prosperity as we have since we found her.'

They saw his eyes grow moist as he spoke of Sita. 'I decided she would only marry a prince who was worthy of her. And we prayed that such a man might come for her some day. Meanwhile, so many kshatriyas came to Mithila, wanting to marry Sita. But I refused them all. One angry king cried at me, "To whom then, Janaka, will you give your daughter?"

'Without thinking, I replied, "To the man who can lift Siva's bow and string it!"

'A hundred kshatriyas came. But none of them could move the bow from where it lay, let alone pick it up. Once an alliance of kings brought a great army and surrounded my city. How could I withstand such a force on my own? I prayed to the devas and they sent a host from heaven, because I was the guardian of Siva's bow. How swiftly that battle was concluded: the kshatriyas fled from the astras of the Gods.

'Yes, quite a tale hangs by the bow of Siva.'

He rose, and took Rama and Lakshmana by the hand. 'Come to my palace and I will have Siva's bow fetched for you to see.'

Just within the palace-gates, the bow was displayed so that all who passed could look at it. It was kept in an iron casket, and worshipped with incense, flowers and mantras during the three sandhyas of the day.

Janaka led them to the palace arena, festive with flags, garlands and banners for the yagna. Already, thousands of people had streamed into it, from far and near, for the sacrifice. When his most recently arrived guests were seated with honour, Janaka clapped his hands to his guards to bring the bow.

In its great casket, Siva's bow was wheeled in. It lay on a low golden cart, glimmering with jewels. A hundred strong men pulled on the massive ropes that dragged the cart of eight wheels. This was Siva's bow with which he had threatened the devas. The crowd rose. A vast murmur *of AUM Namah Sivayah!* was heard, like an ocean wave in that stadium.

Janaka came to Viswamitra and bowed to him, to show the rishi was the most revered person present. The king said aloud, 'Brahmarishi Viswamitra, here lies the bow of Mahadeva that has broken the pride of many a kshatriya. No deva, gandharva, kimpurusha, kinnara, asura or great naga has been able to lift this bow; not through all the ages, since Siva gave it to my ancestor.'

The guards flung back the casket's cover. The jewels on that weapon shot livid shafts of colour through the day and the crowd gasped. Viswamitra turned to Rama at his side; the prince was as tense as a bowstring himself. Softly, the rishi said, 'Rama, my child, go and look at Siva's bow.'

A hush fell on the crowd when Rama rose. He was radiant; he was unworldly blue. He crossed gracefully to the casket. For a moment, he stood gazing at the bow. Then a smile lit his face. He said, 'Muni, may I touch the bow?'

Janaka cried, 'Of course! What else have you come for?'

Viswamitra nodded to Rama. The prince leaned forward and stroked the great weapon with his fingertips. Viswamitra whispered to Janaka, 'Ask him if he can lift it.'

Janaka shot the rishi a doubtful glance: he was afraid lest this prince could not lift Siva's bow. For suddenly, his heart was set on giving his precious Sita to Rama and no one else. But Viswamitra insisted, bristling his brows at the king.

Then Rama himself turned and said in a clear voice, 'I think I can lift the bow and string it. May I try?'

A great intuition of destiny swept the people. The crowd was on its feet, ready for a miracle.

'You may!' cried king and sage together.

Effortlessly, as if it was his own weapon that he carried at his back every day, Rama picked up Siva's bow from its casket. The immense crowd sighed. Calmly, the prince bent the bow and strung it. A thunderflash exploded in his hands. The earth shook and most of the crowd fell down stunned: Siva's awesome bow had snapped in two. Smiling faintly, Rama placed the pieces back in the casket.

Janaka ran forward and embraced him, again and again. Then he hugged Lakshmana and, with tears in his eyes, he bowed over and over to Viswamitra who had brought Rama to Mithila.

Janaka cried to the dazed crowd, 'The prince of Ayodhya has done what no other kshatriya could! I am delighted to give my daughter Sita to him. There is no warrior in heaven or earth like Rama.'

He turned to Viswamitra. 'My lord, may I send messengers to Dasaratha? To ask him to come to Mithila, so Rama and Sita can be married as soon as possible.'

Viswamitra glanced at Rama. He saw joy brimming on the prince's face, and he said, 'Do so, Janaka. Let the news fly to Ayodhya.'

Within the hour, the king's messengers set out on the swiftest horses in Mithila's royal stables.

From her room, high up in Janaka's palace, Sita had seen Rama when he came and she had prayed he would string the bow. She had lost her heart the moment she set eyes on him: it was this prince she had always dreamt of and waited for. She knew him from long ago, from countless lives before. They had belonged together since time began.

Published by HarperCollins Publishers India. Copyright (c) 2001 by Ramesh Menon. All rights reserved. Excerpted from *The Ramayana: A Modern Retelling of the Great Indian Epic* by Ramesh Menon, published in 2003 by North Point Press, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Originally published in 2001 by Writers Club Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, as *The Ramayana: A Modern Translation*. Copyright (c) 2001 by Ramesh Menon. All rights reserved. ▲

BOOK REVIEWS

THE RAMAYANA: A Modern Translation by Ramesh Menon (Harper Collins Publishers India, 1A, Hamilton House, Connaught Place, New Delhi 110001. 2003. xviii + 886 pages. Rs. 795).

Sita's glorious story is eternal. *Sitayah charitam mahat*, says Valmiki. From the day Lava and Kusa recited the tale in the court of Rama, to this day when K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar has Sita go through nightmare visions of the Atom Bomb (*Sitayana*), the theme is as contemporaneous as ever. How we sat glued to the Ramanand Sagar serial! And do we not remain fascinated watching Yugo Sako's production of the *Ramayana* cartoon, tingling to the music of Vanraj Bhatia? As Kamban said, whoever speaks of Rama's story, be he a rakshasa or a monkey or anyone else, he streams restorative nectar into our veins. Even the desecratory writer becomes an instrument for a re-consecration of Rama, such is the *Ramayana* mystique. The saffron-tinted blaze of Suresh Muthukulam's painting on the cover captures the eye.

Ramesh Menon proceeds with Valmiki's epic in hand for limning his breezy tale though we would be missing some significant points. Like Sita's taunting Rama that her father had chosen a woman in man's garb as his son-in-law. There are some fizzy additions too.

The jagged puzzles of the epic remain. The killing of Vali just cannot be explained away and Ramesh Menon takes recourse to an epiphanic moment: "Rama's voice opened a path of light out of the bondage of the body; and when he had a glimpse of what lay beyond, Vali understood who this dark prince was, who stood before him. A smile touched his lips, and his eyes softened. He knew Rama had not only killed him, but also, delivered him to eternal life." (p. 322).

Presently Ramesh Menon comes up with the finest chapter heading, "Leap of Faith". Maruti goes to Lanka and Menon slips in a suggestive sociological sentence. "Hanuman was an apocalyptic beast, exulting as the city burned, roaring his joy to the sky, beating his chest like thunder: *celebrating the triumph of the natural jungle over the city of artifice.*" Sita's prayer keeps Agni from harming Hanuman.

While Menon has simplified his telling in innumerable ways, he has wisely retained many names of the opposing armies giving the Yuddha Kanda a Miltonic sublimity. It is not the battle that is terrible but the fire-ordeal of Sita. As in Valmiki, it is Rama who fails in this ordeal as he does again in the Uttara Kanda when he banishes Sita. What had happened to this man of Dharma, this image of Satya? Is it all sham, then?

The Phalasaruti concludes Menon's retelling of Valmiki's epic with the assurance that one gains all the four Purusharthas by reading or listening to Rama's tale. However, Menon's own recital continues for a few more pages and makes us sit up. Ah, now we will have to get back to the first page and read the entire *Ramayana* carefully!

For, in the epilogue, Menon tells us a story prevalent in Kerala. Sita was the daughter of Ravana and Mandodari. When enciente, Mandodari left Ravana in a huff because he preferred Dhanyamalini. She abandoned the newborn babe Sita near Mithila where Janaka found her and brought her up. Menon has two hints for us to work upon. Had not Hanuman mistaken Mandodari for Sita in Ravana's antahpura?

"Then, there is the fatal attraction Sita held for Ravana. He was the wisest king of his time, why, perhaps of all time. Yet, he sacrificed everything he had, his people, his brothers, his sons, his

precious Lanka, and, at last, his very life, for Sita. In the most ancient Indian tradition, it has been said that, at times, one's worst enemies from previous lives are born as one's children, to fulfil fate's most mysterious, most savage, designs."

A sombre envoi for a very welcome addition to our Ramayana library.

— Prema Nandakumar

EXPERIENCING SAI BABA'S SHIRDI: A Guide: by Alison Williams. 2002. Pub: Saipatham Publications, POBox 101, Vijayawada 520001 <mail@saipatham.com>

Alison Williams brings Shirdi and Bâbâ vividly to the reader. This guide assists a visitor in a short walking tour of the six main places of Shirdi: Khandoba Temple, Gurusthân, Dwârkâmâi, Châvadi, Lendi Gardens and the Samâdhi Mandir. A second section of the guide provides more extensive information about the places and includes excerpts of Sai Baba's experiences there.

The information is presented in very clear and practical language and excellent photographs depict the places described. Objects which were personally used by Sai Baba are shown in clear photographs or drawings as well.

In addition to the six places mentioned, the book also covers other temples in Shirdi, the houses of Sai Baba's devotees, major festivals in Shirdi, and practical tips for the visitors.

The author describes the dhuni fire, the kolamba water pot, the nimbar grinding stone and bag of wheat, and the bathing stone, etc of Dwârkâmâi the small mosque, in great detail.

The Châvadi has importance due to the fact that Bâbâ slept here on alternate nights during his last ten years of life.

The Samâdhi Mandir is described in full detail. Bâbâ stated that he went to Shirdi because his guru's tomb was there. His own life clearly illustrates the importance of being at the place or tomb of the saints. Now millions visit Shirdi because his samâdhi is there. He stated that, "I will fulfill the purpose of my

incarnation. My dust will speak for me. I will be vigorous from the tomb as well". The author states that, "The atmosphere of fervent and one pointed devotion reaches it's zenith here."

This guide will greatly assist people in taking full advantage of this and all the wonderful experiences of Sri Sai Bâbâ and his Shirdi.

— Marsha Somers

BEYOND RELIGION: Meditations on our true nature: by Robert Powell. 2001. Pub: The Blue Dove Press. <www.bluedove.org> <bdp@bluedove.org>, pp211, US\$15.95.

The author is familiar to many readers of The Mountain Path. In fact, several of his essays in this collection were first printed in this magazine. The book was published in 2001 and I am led to believe is one of the last in his series of philosophical enquiries. Mr. Powell with considerable skill in the relative brevity of the 'meditations', brings to our attention aspects of the nature of our personal reality and subtly reveals our unconscious assumptions concerning who we actually are in the scheme of things and events. One can see in his writings the influence of Nisargadatta Mahârâj, J. Krishnamûrti, Swâmi Âtmânanda as well as Bhagavân. He has successfully melded their teachings into a broad spectrum that is intelligible and useful, particularly for Western readers who may not be familiar or attracted to the concepts as enunciated in the traditional Indian *darshanas*.

There are essential areas of investigation that Mr. Powell gently discusses in his dialogues with the reader. Existence, consciousness, subject and object, the purport of advaita, space and time are all subtly unraveled with masterful ease. One would regard these meditations as a springboard for the reader to begin the task of traveling the path towards self-revelation.

In conclusion, here is a taste of what is in store:

"The mind must go out of business. The mind is an instrument of focusing, and only that—it always narrows down and fragments that which is whole, that which is. Like a lens that focuses the light falling upon it, so the mind concentrates the field of attention, focuses it, and in the process causes distortion."

"People on occasion have asked how I can advocate non-dualism in nature and the cosmos. They are confusing *advaita* with monism. The latter stands in opposition to all diversity. Its purpose is to satisfy the intellectual craving for fitting all phenomena into a rigid conceptual system and not to find out the ultimate truth. I have also referred to the reality of *advaita* as the background to all backgrounds, beyond the body, mind and senses, and as That which is its own cause, Self-luminous."

— Peter Pichelmann

ISÂVÂSYA UPANISAD: by Prof. G.T. Pandya, 2000. Pub: Mr. P. J. Thakare and Mrs. Meena Prakash Thakare, 306 Abbe Lane, Clarksville, Tennessee 37043, USA. Pp. 394 including five Appendices. Free.

The *Isâvâsyâ Upanisad* is considered to be one of the ten main Upanisads in the Vedic literature. Consisting of only eighteen two line verses it is the last section of the *Sukla Yajur Veda* dating back to some 4,500 years. The book under review is an elaborate treatise on this Upanisad analysed from a largely social angle. There are fifteen chapters covering 364 pages. These deal with the principles of *jîvatmâ* and *paramâtmâ* (individual soul and supreme soul), knowledge and ignorance, physical well-being and mental health. Each verse is quoted in its original Sanskrit form, followed by a transliteration in English, the same repeated in prose order and prose translation, then a poetical translation and a concluding commentary. The author has drawn extensively from other religious and philosophical texts.

The first of the Appendices repeats the eighteen Sanskrit verses closing with the *sânti mantra*, the second and third ones again giving prose and poetic translations. Appendix 4 gives a key to transliteration and Appendix 5 lists 22 references for further reading.

The *Isâvâsyâ Upanisad* epitomizes the teachings of the *Bhagavat Gîtâ* and it is very significant that its *Rishi* is thought to be Srîman Nârâyana or Lord Vishnu, one of whose incarnations is the *Gîtâchârya*.

The author has accomplished a patently painstaking task in bringing out this book. However, there are far too many repetitions of the same matter, which the reviewer found to be somewhat jarring.

— T. Sankaran

WORDS FROM THE SOUL: Time, East/West Spirituality, and Psychotherapeutic Narrative: Stuart Sovatsky. 2001. Pub: State University of New York Press, pp241, US\$—

Here is an intense narrative that churns the turbid ocean of Psychotherapy, and builds the argument that the elixir lies elsewhere altogether. It questions the utility of past oriented psychotherapies, "the spell-casting, traditional way into analytic depths", where as a therapist "...we must repeat the pressure and represent ourselves as infallible, till at last we are really told something..."; methods that skew the view away from the present and the future. In turn, the author offers a holistic approach that is based on the acceptance of time as an experience of a stream of eternal impermanence, whereby one lets go of the burdens of past linkages by nurturing healing sentiments such as forgiveness, forbearance and gratitude; whereby one feels the poignancy of impermanence in time-passage and recognizes in that the freedom to relate anew; whereby one feels wonder about the future that acts as lightning flashes of epiphany.

The author deconstructs current theories and says "The strange discipline

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

in Western academic philosophy and psychology of seeking answers primarily, if not exclusively, within the established Western canon can seem like working with one hand tied behind the back, or worse." The author dwells on the psychotherapeutic aspects of Kundalinî Yoga, of which he has been a dedicated practitioner for many years. The book elaborates on the spiritual awakenings consequent on the path of Kundalinî and terms these transformations as "post-genital puberty". In contrast to Freudian and Jungian views, in these awakenings "...the narrator ego outgrows his genital primacy, desire-based, subject-oriented immaturities during the puberties of the mind (known as *unmanî mudra* ('no-mind mind-delight gesture') popularly called 'stages of meditation'. At those points, a new identity forces itself upon the meditator who now states he 'is and is not' there." Exploring the Kundalinî theory the author says that a "spiritually inspiring therapy merges", "For, in the Kundalinî theory of the body, our deepest sensations are understood, not so much as the inklings of a buried past, but more as tremors of an emergent and hopeful present-future." Rounding of his narrative with a forceful argument for a "Spirituality-Inclusive Psychopathology", the book makes a powerful reading.

A word of caution; this book is not meant for casual reading. It is a maze of arguments that throws punches at the reader from everywhere. If you are a psychotherapist, have a flair for words-sentences-terms-constructs-complexities, and have a feel for spirituality, this book is for you.

— GJK

HYMN TO GODDESS DURGA: The Destroyer of Mahishasura: tr. S. Ramaratnam. 2002. ISBN 81-7823-232. Pub: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600004. pp30, Rs8.

Srî Mahishâsuramardinî Stôtram, a book of prayer, also chanted during bhajans in melting melodies, contains

twenty verses composed by a Râmakrishna Kavi in praise of the war goddess, Mahishâsuramardinî, the destroyer of the evil asura Mahisha. The mythological version of Mahishâsuramardinî is the heroic episode of Goddess Durgâ's divine victory gained over demonic and evil forces. It occupies the second *charita* of *Dêvî Mâhâtmyam*, a sacred text dedicated to the worship of the prominent deity in Sakti cult. The deity is invoked during the last night of *Navarâtri Pûjâ*, an important Hindu festival for women.

This small book is an English paraphrase alongside powerfully resonant Sanskrit stanzas and explains how the goddess as Divine Mother is quick to grant boons to the devotees even without their asking for this and that.

A precise translation with transliteration of the original text, its history unknown, has been rendered by S. Râmaratnam, principal of Sanskrit Râmakrishna and Vivêkânanda College. Mini in size, the book provides a mega celebration in the mind every time the seeker sings and surrenders at the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Goddess who shook the evil and asuric forces to their roots for the sake of each and every soul's ultimate freedom, *Môksha* from the clutches of samsâric existence.

— R. Râmâsami

[The mere chanting of such stôtras, ensuring increasing resonant sense about the terrible war against the 'demon' described within, requires no erudition, but desperate faith. Relentless chanting, pârâyana, is an act of surrender that can successfully confront the never-ending aggression on one's peace by the 'unofficial' I-creation which lies at the root of body-world transient mirage. Anxieties over personal and family welfare bond us and burden us in individual and collective Karma arising out of the serious lapse of non-unity of thought-word-action (defective Dharma) in our daily lives. Such japa sâdhana is also a final refuge for a 'valid vote' in the cosmic dimension. - JJ].



Celebration of *Navaratri* at Ashram

Navaratri, the festival of nine nights in honour of the Mother Goddess was celebrated between September 26 and October 5.

Chanting of the *Lalita Sahasranama*, the thousand names of the Goddess is done a hundred times during this period. The *Devi Mahatmya* (*Durga Saptasati*) is also recited every day.

Decoration to Mother Yogambika is special during *Navaratri* and done in a different manner each night. The decorations are: Meenakshi, Gajalakshmi, Tapas (the Goddess performs penance), Linga Puja (in which the Goddess worships the Siva Linga), Rishaba Vahanam (the Goddess on the Bull Mount), Sessa Sayanam (the Goddess reclining on the serpent bed as Lord Ranganatha), Venu Ganam (the Goddess dressed as Lord Krishna playing the flute), Saraswati (the Goddess of Learning), and Mahishasura Mardhani (the destroyer of the demon Mahisha). Appichi Mama, the chief priest of the ashram who has performed *puja* to Sri Bhagavan and the Mother for over 50 years, decorated Goddess Yogambika with love and devotion.

A large number of devotees and visitors worshipped at the shrine of the Mother on all the days. The festival evokes a warm atmosphere created by the families visiting from the town and Ramana Nagar.

Bhagavan Publications in Gujarat

Due to the efforts of the Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, the

teachings of Sri Bhagavan are being disseminated in Gujarati translations of ashram publications. Sri Niranjanbhai Mehta, Secretary of the Samiti has been instrumental in the project. Many generous Gujarati devotees have made it financially possible to print and distribute the books at the lowest possible price. Each of the four translations to date (see advertisement on back inside cover) are given free to each of the 400-500 members of the Samiti. Ramana devotees in Gujarat may contact the Samiti for satsangh.

Dr R. T. Vyas, former head of the Prachiya Vidya Mandir, Sayaji Rao University, Baroda, translated all the books.

Pavalakundru



“Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try how hard you may. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to stop it. This is certain. The best course therefore is for one to be silent.”

This was the advice Sri Bhagavan gave his mother who came and met him for the first time after his sudden departure from Madurai. Such a historic place is the Pavalakundru temple where Bhagavan stayed for six

months in 1898. The temple is situated on an eastern spur of Arunachala hill.

Legend has it that Parvati after initiation by Sage Gautama did *tapas* near Pavalakundru. On Kartikai Purnima when the star Krittika is in ascension, She performed *giri pradakshina* and Lord Siva appeared before Her at Pavalakundru and

granted half His body at Her request. The Pavalakundru temple is thus important from the religious and spiritual point of view.

Recently the state government approved an ashram proposal to renovate this temple. The ashram plans to restore the summit perimeter wall, the temple roof and walls as well as clean up the open courtyard.

The year 2004 marks the 125th Jayanti of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. The ashram plans to celebrate this event throughout the year. Various activities have been planned. New publications including a special souvenir will be produced for the occasion. The Pavalakundru temple where Sri Bhagavan's mother met him after a prolonged search, is to be renovated by the ashram. The ashram also plans to renovate the Arunagirinatha temple near Ayyankulam tank in Tiruvannamalai town.

A Ratha Yatra (chariot) is being organised from Tiruchuli, Sri Bhagavan's birthplace. This will travel throughout the length and breadth of Tamilnadu spreading the spiritual message of Sri Bhagavan. The 125th Jayanti falls on Tuesday, 28th December 2004.

Sri Vidya Havan

SRI VIDYA HAVAN, a day-long *yagna* commemorating the beginning of *Sri Chakra Puja* at the ashram was until now performed in the second half of March. From next year (2004), the *havan* will be conducted in the second half of January. It will be conducted on 29th January 2004.

Obituary

Smt Lakshmi Amma, a devotee of Sri Bhagavan passed away at Palakkad on 5th August. Smt Lakshmi was the mother of Sri K. Pazhaniappan, organiser of Sri Ramana Satsanga Vedi, Malampuzha, Palakkad. Kunju Swami and Swami Sureshananda, Vijnana Ramaniya Ashram, had blessed her.

AFTERWORD

BLOWING IN THE WIND

(A cautionary tale)

In a small town in Italy lived a farmer called Antonio. He was a good man who went to church regularly and was always ready to help a friend in trouble. However he had one overriding vice. He was an irrepressible gossip. He knew that what he was doing was wrong, but he thought that it was only a minor sin compared with all the good he did, and anyway he went to confession every Sunday and was absolved of blame. His father confessor knew him well and sent him on his way with a few prayers to recite for his tapas. One day Antonio got a surprise when, instead of the usual formula he was asked to go and collect a basket of feathers.

“Feathers Father? Are you sure?”

“Just go and do it my son,” was the reply. “And then you must go for a walk. Go past your farm and past your neighbours. Go through the town and the market, and everywhere you go you must put your hand in the basket of feathers and scatter them along the way. Now go, and come back next week to tell me how you got on.

Antonio broadcast the feathers as he was told, and felt so stupid that he just had to join his friends in the evening for a drink and a gossip. He didn’t even realise what he was doing until he was in the middle of a good story about someone he had seen up in the hills. It was too late to stop so he finished the story and went home.

“Bless me father for I have sinned.” He recited at confession that Sunday.

“And did you gossip again?” He was asked.

“Not much. My words do no harm father, they just blow on the wind.

“Alright my son,” said the priest. “Now I want you to go back along all the places where you walked last week and collect the feathers that have blown in the wind and put them back into the basket.” ▲