

CONTENTS

RAMANA ASHTOTTARAM	2
EDITORIAL: The Ashram	3
RAMANA LEELA: Krishna Bhikshu	7
ADVAITA GOES WEST: Alan Jacobs	19
KEYWORD: AHAM VRITTI	23
ULLADU NARPADU VERSE THREE: S. Ram Mohan	25
IMAGES: Katya Osborne	31
GHAZALS OF HAFIZ: Nawazuddin	37
THE POWER OF OUR SENSATIONS - WORLD CREATION: Hans Heimer	51
LAKSHMI THE COW: Michael Highburger	57
SRI ARUNACHALA PANCHARATNAM COMMENTARY: Sadhu Om	63
BHAGAVAN'S HERBAL REMEDIES:	75
ENCOMIUM TO DR K. SUBRAHMANIAN: Ram Mohan	79
DR K. SUBRAHMANIAN - A FRIEND LIKE NO OTHER : I. S. Madugula	85
SILENT LANGUAGE: K. Subrahmanian	89
ADVAITA PRIMER: T. S. Viswanatha Sharma	93
BOOK EXCERPT: VIJNANA BHAIRAVA: Lakshman Joo	97
OZHIVIL ODUKKAM: KANNUDAYA VALLALAR	107
BOOK REVIEWS	122
ASHRAM BULLETIN	125

Ramana Ashtottaram

16. *Om Mahāṣaktinipātēna prabuddhāya namaha.*

Prostration to the one whose awakening was perfect and permanent due to the descent of the supreme power (Mahasakti).

Mahasakti nipatah: It is a descent of the divine, not an ascent of the human being. The Katha Upanishad says, “He whom the atman chooses, he alone attains the atman”. The choice was Mahasakti’s, not the young Venkataraman, that he should become a channel of her Grace.

17. *Om Paramārthavidē namaha.*

Prostration to the one who has realized the ultimate reality.

Bhagavan realized and taught that the meaning of ‘I’ is Being-Awareness-Bliss, the identity of self and Self. This is the supreme truth. From that golden moment in July 1896 when he transcended the *upadhis* (attributes of limitation and separation) and attained complete identity with Universal Awareness, he enjoyed the unbroken bliss of Eternal Being (*Satchidananda*). Man has become God without ceasing to be man. An ordinary schoolboy has been chosen by Mother Sakti to be and function as Kumara, a perennial source of spiritual energy and a living centre of creative goodness.

18. *Om Tivrāya namaha.*

Tivrah: Prostration to one who is intensely active (far from inert).

The *paramarthavit*, the knower of the Supreme Truth as referred to in the previous name, is seemingly inert, but in reality is intensely active. His restfulness is only apparent, like the stillness of a top spinning fast. The jiva, the individual soul, touched by jnana, becomes creatively alive with *bhakti* (love of God) and *karuna* (compassion). The youngster would soon move fast towards his final, geographical destination on earth, Arunachala, the symbol of *moksha*, the ultimate goal for all mankind.

EDITORIAL

The Ashram

AN ashram is generally regarded as a place apart from the normal functioning of society. It has its own rules and codes of conduct, most of which are unspoken but with some acquaintance we learn them, sometimes painfully. An ashram is a refuge from the normal demands and constraints of society. It is a place where people can realign their lives towards a higher purpose. It is supposedly a place of quiet and, if wanted, uninterrupted solitude. Some have the starry eyed notion that the ashram is a paradise free of all responsibilities where one lives in a dreamy lotus land. It is not. What the ashram does provide is the space and time to reflect upon one’s life. In Sanskrit an ‘a’ prefix usually indicates a negative. ‘A’dvaita...not two. ‘A’shram. *Sram* can be translated as fatigue, work, exertion, wandering. The whole word, ‘ashram’ can be interpreted to mean happiness, because it is a not a drudgery to be in this place; it is a joy. It is a place of rest, of spiritual energy and stillness where things, ideally, occur smoothly.

When Bhagavan permanently came down from Arunachala in 1922 an ashram slowly developed around him and the samadhi of his mother whom he said, had attained mukti and was therefore worthy of respect and worship. I have heard in passing that Bhagavan

once said that the area adjacent to the ashram would one day have tall buildings. In Bhagavan's time, this may have sounded fanciful, but we can see the forthcoming truth of the prophecy today.

In previous years we heard the honk of peacocks and the bells of the temples but now the relative quiet of those days is gone and we are confronted with a new era where the noise of buses, trucks and other vehicles intrudes into the ashram environs. There are busloads of tourists and a steady stream of people who come to breathe the relatively open space of the ashram with its clean grounds as opposed to the clutter, dirt and frantic pace in the nearby town. Though the world has come to the ashram, it is still a haven for all.

In these changing times the ashram and devotees require flexibility. We can easily forget that Bhagavan was a radical in his own time. He made available teachings that were held secret or were obscured over the centuries. He made available to all the chanting of the Vedas; he gave instructions to all who came and were fit to receive his instructions. He neither excluded anyone nor demanded loyalty. All were free to come and go as they please. It is the same today. For some when they arrive it is the beginning of a life-long association. For others a short visit is sufficient for their requirements in this lifetime. There is no rigid rule of who is in and who is out. Such thinking is irrelevant. In fact, for some who are mature enough one visit may be sufficient.

The ashram is centred upon the samadhis of Bhagavan and his mother, Alagammal. Rituals and chants are performed each day and many people participate in this communion of the spirit. A sense of peace emanates from both shrines and for those who approach these places with the right attitude, they receive blessings words cannot adequately describe. Though apparently these rituals have nothing to do with self-enquiry, atma vichara, they do remind us in a very visible way the purpose of our stay. Anything that helps us to remain focused on Bhagavan is valid.

The ashram is many things to many people and yet it gives us all something. It all depends on what we ask and our capacity to be sensitive to the subtle response. For there is a response and the

number of people who continue to come is ample illustration of its potency.

We could say that the ashram is a generator of consciousness: it makes us more alive and tunes us in to the deeper layers of our awareness. We travel into the inner reaches of our own mind and heart. We learn more about who we are in the light of the sun we call Ramana. It is a mystery how and why it happens, but it does and for our purposes in this life that is all we need to know if we are to step courageously forward and ask who am I?

The ashram is not only a set of buildings but also just as important, it is a powerful idea. When we are physically far from the ashram the mere idea of it keys us into the feeling of what it is like to be there. In the same respect the idea of Bhagavan is fundamental to our understanding when we become connected to his teaching. He is the centre; he is the sun who radiates grace and understanding.

We are aware that the thought of Bhagavan has a powerful transforming effect upon us. We know this from personal familiarity. All devotees have experienced the mysterious influence of this something we call Bhagavan, although Ramana himself died physically in 1950. Though now we have no contact with him in this way, what we term his presence is still very much in evidence. For those who have experienced his grace, words are not necessary and for those who have no connection with the idea it may appear foolish. It is for people to discover for themselves the intimate relationship with this force. It calls for a certain degree of faith that soon enough is abundantly rewarded. All we need do is ask and this mysterious "automatic divine action" swings into force.

In the Vedas there is talk about the cosmic purusha, the divine being whose body is the entire universe as we sense it. By analogy the ashram is Bhagavan's body, the samadhi the heart, the mother's samadhi the lungs, the buildings his limbs, his devotees the blood cells which when they heed instructions of the heart correctly, revivify the ashram and keep the flame of the teaching alive. It is an idea but like all ideas it generates within us a fundamental change of attitude if we listen carefully. When we realise we all are

interconnected then the purpose of the ashram becomes clearer. We are all here to learn.

It was often remarked during Bhagavan's physical lifetime that so much drama and crisis pervaded the everyday functioning of the ashram. Apparently he was unmoved and did nothing when people complained to him. Instead his silence was a rebuke. Once it is related he said that there were people who came to the ashram for a bath and that they end up rolling in the mud.

We too are in a similar position today. The emptiness and quiet of former years is lost now and life has become much more complicated. It is more difficult to centre attention on the reason why we are here at the ashram. But when we overcome the distractions and value the idea of the presence of Bhagavan, everything can settle into place, even the darkness of our occasional wrong behaviour. We are here to learn about Bhagavan and about ourselves.

It is here in the ashram the miracle of alchemy occurs. Though it is said Bhagavan is everywhere we all at certain times require a more substantial sense of certainty and reassurance. That is why we come to the ashram because there is a concentrated glow of consciousness in the air. When we enter the gates of the ashram it seems we have entered a different world, a world dense with peace. Like a venerable guardian, the first sight of the old *illupai* tree in the front courtyard, launches us into the realisation that yes, we are home again. We know our consciousness changes in this environment and the problems which vexed us fade in intensity, and with effort and time in the ashram, we can ride over them and see them for what they are: waves that come and go while we ride the crest of Bhagavan's patronage, his blessings whose pleasing nourishment heals us and leads us on into the light. ▲

Ramana Leela

The Method of Bhagavan's Teaching

KRISHNA BHIKSHU

In 1936 Krishna Bhikshu published Ramana Leela in Telugu. It was one of three biographies of Bhagavan published during his lifetime. In 1949 the author read through the entire work in front of Bhagavan who corrected any errors. This edited translation of Chapter 38 is by Smt. Anasurya. The ashram has recently published a complete English translation of Ramana Leela by Pingali Surya Sundaram.

A visitor once approached Bhagavan and asked him, "Bhagavan! Why do you not travel around as Sri Sankara and some others did and give discourses thereby turning ignorant men towards the right path?" Bhagavan replied with his beautiful smile, "Mahatmas take birth on this earth due to infinite grace. Even if they rarely speak the waves of power issuing from them spread out and enlighten the world with spiritual glory."

Actually this question is inappropriate in itself. When divine beings manifest on the earth as human incarnations, they appear for a purpose and they do not perform other activities. The birth of Ramana Maharshi was intended to validate the attainment of Self-realisation and to discourage unnecessary arguments about metaphysical knowledge by demonstrating the state of experiential

knowledge. The desire for attainment of this knowledge arises from tendencies carried over from one's previous births. It is a waste of time and energy to try and enlighten those who are not in search of the truth. The second point is that silent communication of knowledge (*mauna upadesha*) is the best way to commune. It is superfluous to expect verbal instruction when the subtle sakti automatically pervades the whole body of the aspirant and leaves him in a state of grace. Sri Ramana is not one to sow when the field is not ploughed and ready.

When this question arose on another occasion, Bhagavan explained with utmost clarity, "An electric fan, even though requested will not give light. Neither will an electric bulb give us breeze on request." In the field of action each one has to work out his own appointed destiny.

Sri Ramana also told someone else, "Some people want me to travel around and give discourses. Rajeswarananda said he would arrange a special train for me to travel in. He wanted me to go to places and bless people who were unable to come this far."

Once a child wanted Sri Ramana to come with her to her parents' place. Ramana replied, "Well, child! If I go along with you what will be the plight of people who come here for me? Where can they search for me? If you take me to your place someone else will want me to go to their place too. Where will be the end to this? How can I go to them all?"

Intense desire for liberation is not an easy state of mind. Many who come to Bhagavan are in distress. What teaching can be given to those who want relief from illnesses, worldly troubles and planetary afflictions? In Bhagavan's presence they are able to experience peace according to their capacity.

Some erudite scholars came to Bhagavan explicitly in order to exhibit their knowledge. Bhagavan's *maunam* was all that they got for their trouble. Finally they were ashamed of their arrogance and returned the wiser.

Bhagavan said that there is a lot of unnecessary, perverse logic in many commentaries on the works of great people. "When the sayings are simply advaitic, these people try and twist the text to mean

whatever they want to expound. For example, we can take the commentary on Nammalwar's work. He was a Vaishnava saint who said, 'Lord! Before I knew you I thought you were separate from me. Now, when I have known you, you alone are.' This is supportive of advaita."¹

Some have no interest in erudition. They would not take the trouble to read a few basic scriptures that could remove their doubts, but they want them cleared by Bhagavan. Bhagavan in his infinite compassion would oblige them, but these people do not understand the impropriety of giving such unnecessary trouble to Bhagavan. Even after great effort, some people were still steeped in doubt. Towards such people Bhagavan would be all compassion and would go to great lengths to remove their confusion.

There were some who would not enter into any discussion on scriptures. They were already dedicated to sadhana. The only obstruction to realization for them would be attachment to some worldly objects. Unless this is removed they cannot progress in their quest. Sadhana for many births would be needed to achieve true detachment. On this point Maharshi does not like his devotees to be worried. In his opinion, total detachment is jnana in itself. Until one is firmly fixed in Self-knowledge, total detachment and desirelessness are impossible. Is there an actual measure to indicate the detachment necessary for the attainment of Self-knowledge? This question underlies the clarification to Natanananda's questions given by Bhagavan, "If you are really unfit for Self-knowledge why did you have the desire to meet Mahatmas?" It means that the desire to receive darshan of Mahatmas is itself the required qualification. We also should remember that Self-enquiry is not possible if there is no detachment at all. Bhagavan tells us that detachment and other requirements are developed as a matter of course when one follows Self-enquiry.

Every seeker of truth needs detachment. There is no doubt that it has to be acquired; but Bhagavan's method does not directly combat

¹ See *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, no 67, *Arpana*, 22nd August 1946.

attachment to desires. Bhagavan would say: “If the bird in the cage goes on struggling it is strangled. It is the same with the worldly desires. We should not brood and worry over them. An evil desire is like any other desire. The best way to get over this predicament is to concentrate on the enquiry into the identity of the one who desires, or follow the method of ‘Neti, Neti’. When you cut at the base of a tree, the flowers and fruits naturally fall.”

Another way was shown by Sri Ramakrishna who conquered lust by thinking of his wife as the Divine Mother. If one drinks the ambrosia of God’s name can there be enjoyment of the honey of worldly desires?

This is exactly the method of Maharshi: pay no attention to worldly desires and search for atma. Suppose a doubt arises about the necessity of enquiry at all. The answer is this: many have been attracted by worldly phenomena and have been utterly defeated and driven mad in the struggle to be free of them. When at last they came out of the maze and met Bhagavan they surrendered to him and were saved in the nick of time.

To develop intense detachment, ritual baths, performance of japa, sandhya, dhyana, satsang, self-discipline and the presence of Mahatmas are all helpful; but they should not be too stringent. They should not be an obstruction to Self-enquiry but a means that leads one to the goal of detachment. There is an apt saying; ‘for the realized souls disciplines drop off by themselves.’

When troubles seem unendurable some people are disgusted with worldly life and come to Bhagavan with the intention of becoming sannyasins. Natanananda was such a one. Bhagavan usually dissuades such people from taking what could well prove to be a wrong step. There was a person at Arunachala who had intense vairagya. He thought that since Bhagavan was not being merciful towards him he had better commit suicide. He wanted Bhagavan’s darshan for one last time. At that very moment he heard Bhagavan say to another, “See, what a great effort is needed to stitch a small leaf plate. You have to collect leaves. A few sticks must be dried and split. We have to carefully arrange one leaf over the other and make a plate. After

preparing it we do not throw it away immediately. We take our meal on it and only then discard it. The teaching is that we cannot discard the body until the *prarabdha* (karma in this life) has been experienced.”

The next step is the goal. Because of the difference in fitness and the strength of diverse tendencies, the goals will also be quite different. Bhagavan knew this and taught according to the tendencies of the individuals who worshipped various gods. This might cause the illusion in the followers of various religions that Bhagavan was instructing them in the teachings of their own masters. Usually when a person who was already engaged in a particular mode of worship came to Bhagavan, he would tell them to continue in their own system and would in no way disturb their beliefs, since Bhagavan considers that everyone ultimately has to turn towards Self-enquiry. Whatever path is followed he asks us never to forget this point: ‘Be sympathetic to the other person’s point of view so that his response will be open and positive.’

Bhagavan never liked people of different religions to fight over their individual beliefs. He would say, “As long as there is worship of the form these differences and quarrels are inevitable. Everyone likes the taste of sweetness. But each has his own liking for the particular type of sweetness of his choice. One likes honey, another likes sugar candy, another likes sugar and still another likes the juice of sugar cane. It is but natural that each one declares that his own choice is the best. But it is not the ultimate. If one wants just sweetness and not the taste of any material there is no other way for him except to become the sweetness itself.”

There were some who asked if they could worship certain gods. In 1925 a swami called Vallimalai Murugar came accompanied by a group of lawyers. He was famed as Tiruppugazh Swamy since he sang *Tiruppugazh* enchantingly in various tunes and with great emotion. Tiruppugal is a corpus of songs composed by Arunagirinathar on Lord Subrahmanya. Murugar was a glorious singer but he did not know the meaning of the songs. Maharshi heard him sing some of the Tiruppugal and explained in great detail, with devotion and great compassion, the meaning to the whole group.



Murugar had no other education but after this he could explain the whole text of Tiruppugal even to great pandits. This was the way Bhagavan helped him in the worship of a form. One of the group asked Bhagavan if it is good to do Gayatri meditation mechanically. Bhagavan said, “It is good even if it is done mechanically, but the orb of the sun itself can be meditated upon with better results. The last mantra ‘*Namassavitre Jagadeka Chakshushe*’ can be taken as a help in the meditation.”²

One who meditates upon and surrenders to such a powerful being will merge in him. The sakti of whatever god is worshipped knows what is good for the one who meditates and gives what is appropriate. When this meditation progresses with intensity, the divine being meditated upon becomes infinite and ultimately formless. Thus meditation of the form becomes meditation of the formless. Gradually meditation of the qualified becomes meditation of the unqualified.

A group of pilgrims from Gorakhpur came to Bhagavan during their pilgrimage of the southern temples. The group leader asked, “Bhagavan! You are a jnani. You say you are everything. But we are only devotees of Isvara. We think we are different from Him. How can there be any harmony between our differing concepts?”

Bhagavan replied that only the words are different. “What is happening is the same in both methods. When you intensify the repetition of the name the form disappears. Only the name remains. As long as this does not happen your real goal of worship is the form of your god. Beholding that form *in* everything is the next great step, *sarvam vishnumayam jagat*. But is not the one who meditates included in that which he is meditating on? So he himself is also Vishnu. To behold Vishnu *as* everything is a higher step than beholding Him *in* everything. After this, the form disappears and only pure effulgence (*tejas*) remains. Beyond this is the primal sound (*vak*) of the name. Space (*akasa*) is beyond the sound and when we come to this stage we will see the point where diversity originates. You said your goal is Vishnu. What is to be attained is the all-

² See *Self-Realization*, Chapter XXV, *Meditation at the Ashram*.

pervasiveness of the name. The name arises in us as a form of thought. It means that when the name is repeated mentally it is a form of mental activity. The ultimate goal is singular activity (*ananya chinta*) or single thought. I have given to that single thought a name, *aham*. Names like Vishnu and the other gods exemplify the multiple qualities of the Isvara. But there is not even a single quality in *aham*.”

Krishna Bhikshu also asked Bhagavan the same question, “Bhagavan! Previously I used to see your form in meditation, but nowadays it is not happening.” Bhagavan asked him, “Do you remember the name?” Krishna Bhikshu replied in the affirmative. “Do not worry. The name is greater than the form,” assured Bhagavan.

Bhagavan also explained: “Some people love to worship avatars like Rama and Krishna. Others worship Sakti. During meditation Sakti travels from the form of the Sakti to the devotee. When the mind is merged in the goddess there is no separate existence any more. For the devotee that unparalleled Sakti itself gives the devotee the desire to meditate on the formless aspect of Isvara.”

The goal of meditation is thus explained. Next, the mantra is clarified. As Bhagavan knew the agamas and vedanta thoroughly he would prescribe the mantra which best suited the particular aspirant. Take, for example what Bhagavan told Ganapati Muni. In *Upadesa Saram* Bhagavan says that japa done mentally is better than that done aloud or even that done with movement of the lips. To concentrate on the one who does the japa is the best japa of all. In describing the worship of Isvara with qualities (*saguna*) Bhagavan, like the acharyas of yore, extolled bhakti and indicated that the best method is continuous remembrance flowing like a stream of fluid ghee.

Bhagavan has explained the method of pranayama in *Ramana Gita*. In the *Bhagavad Gita* pranayama and the necessary discipline and asanas were described in full. Bhagavan’s teaching is that whatever the method followed the ultimate goal has to be self-knowledge and one should persevere in his chosen method to reach the final goal.

Bhagavan’s compassion helps each sadhaka in his own chosen path. As he himself is the manifestation of Isvara all paths are acceptable to

him. What does it matter if the path is different because of the differences in the fitness of the aspirants?

From Ramanathapuram a widow called Santammal came to serve Bhagavan. She worshipped a picture of Bhagavan with great devotion. She remembered Bhagavan in all her waking hours and she often saw Bhagavan in her dreams. Whether her eyes were open or closed she would see divine lights and Bhagavan's form in the midst of a great, white radiance.

These manifestations were always with her whether she was at Arunachala or in her home town. At last she told Bhagavan about these visions. Bhagavan taught her that these revelations should not be her goal as they are actually impediments in dhyana and one should not be fascinated by them. Whatever object is tangible either to the gross or to the subtle senses is only a phenomenon. The seer must be seen rather than whatever he sees. Bhagavan emphasised that it is sheer foolishness to feel jubilant over visions.

How can we say in so many words what Bhagavan's teaching is? The manner of his life is in itself his teaching and an example to be followed by all.

Even though Bhagavan helped devotees in so many ways there were some who were not altogether satisfied. They wanted a public acknowledgement of discipleship. Bhagavan was not initiated by anybody. Neither did he initiate anybody in the traditional way nor did he accept anyone as a disciple (*sishtya*). His mere presence was grace enough and he gave sadhakas all the help they needed by his look. Once Major Chadwick asked Bhagavan why he did not initiate anybody by word or touch and did not accept disciples. Bhagavan retorted, "Why should there be this show of initiation? Is it your understanding that you are not accepted unless you go through this rigmarole?" Each devotee was perfectly aware whether he was accepted or not through his own experience. But nobody was able to maintain that they were speaking for Bhagavan nor could anyone claim to be Bhagavan's *sishtya* because of a private sanction of discipleship.

Once some devotees were discussing the meaning of *Ulladu Narpadu* in Bhagavan's presence. After some time they tired of the discussion and asked Bhagavan what was the purpose of the text. Bhagavan told them, "Nothing was written by me with a purpose (*sankalpa*). All the meanings that you have expressed are quite apt."

Each one reads the meaning of a text according to his own light (*samskara*). They understand only so much and act accordingly. Even if more is told to them they would not understand. It once happened that two disciples fought each other via letters to a newspaper, each one declaring that only his own interpretation of Bhagavan's teaching was correct!

The idea people generally have of an initiation is a mantra being given or the touch of the guru's hand or some such thing. Bhagavan usually never did these things. If perhaps an upadesa had to be given in private he would often give it in a dream. For example, Natanananda had initiation through a vision of Bhagavan. Or perhaps it could be through direct eye contact as happened to Ganapati Muni, or even through a touch on the head as in the case of Ramaswami Iyer. Many devotees have declared that Bhagavan removed their doubts and gave guidance through their dreams.

When any question arose about a scriptural saying, Bhagavan would answer in a general way that was useful to all. When a personal initiation was desired it was proper to tell Bhagavan all the sadhana that had been gone through up to that time. Sometimes when there was no specific request for upadesa Bhagavan would give it anyway by speaking to someone else on that subject in the presence of the one needing information.

Bhagavan's upadesa could be in a few words. A child sat in a window recess a little while and shifted to another one to see out. Bhagavan asked her what she was doing. The child said, "Nothing, Swamy." Bhagavan commented on this, "Hear her. Though this child's body is moving she says she is not doing anything. Adults do not seem to know even that much."

A gentleman said, "Bhagavan, you do not do anything. Give me your Sakti and I will do good to the world." Bhagavan laughed

heartily and said, "He does not have even a grain to eat, but wants to run a choultry." This is similar to what he said to Humphreys.

A man was holding a newspaper in his hand. He said, "Bhagavan, you say atma is everywhere. But we cannot see it anywhere." Bhagavan asked him, "Can you say that there is no paper because you do not notice it beneath the print you were reading?"

A man was careless in serving food in the dining room. Some of the food fell on a person's leg. Bhagavan noticed it and said, "People think they are great as soon as they start handling a ladle. They do not seem to know who is really great. We have to distinguish between one who craves for greatness and the true guru who accepts a little from us, gives his merit to us and takes our sins on himself."

When Bhagavan was living in Skandashram a disciple asked, "Bhagavan, it is decreed that action should be performed, but selflessly. How do we understand this?" Bhagavan kept quiet for the time being. Then one day Bhagavan walked in the forest accompanied by some devotees including the disciple who had asked the question. Bhagavan cut a dry branch and worked on it for about an hour and eventually made a walking stick. An old shepherd appeared and walked towards the group with great difficulty. Bhagavan immediately gave him the walking stick he had prepared and said as a general comment, "Karma was performed selflessly." Naturally the disciple understood the implication of what Bhagavan said.

In this way Bhagavan's every word becomes an upadesa. It depends on the receiving ability of the person concerned.

His teaching is superb and his actions were perfect and are to be emulated by one and all. ▲

Advaita Goes West

ALAN JACOBS

WHEN 'Bodhidharma went west' whereby the Buddha's original teaching was transported to China in 520BC it suffered acute changes as a consequence. His followers rejected the Upanishadic means of the Indian rshis as a way to enlightenment. They advocated instead a special transmission outside the scriptures. In addition the original Indian Buddhist teaching was assimilated into a Taoist and Confucianist culture and underwent severe modifications in emphasis and delineation. Differing schools of interpretation inevitably appeared.

Is something similar happening when the original teachings of Ramana Maharshi are now being exported almost wholesale to Europe, America, and Australasia?

There is no question that the Maharshi intended his 'Teachings to go west'. His appearance in a dream to Paul Brunton in London, without even Brunton having heard of Ramana was extraordinary

Alan Jacobs has made a lifelong study of mysticism and of the teachings and ideas of Gurdjieff, Krishnamurti & Ramana Maharshi. He is the author of many articles, poems and translations including the recent *The Bhagavad Gita* and *The Upanishads*.

and cannot be seen as a mere accident. It led to Brunton's book "The Search in Secret India", which sold like wildfire in the nineteen thirties. It eventually led to the visits of such esteemed worthies as Grant Duff, Alan Chadwick, Arthur Osborne and Mouni Sadhu. Here were gifted men able to spread the good news to their associates about the great sage of Arunachala and his power of transmission through silence. They were guides to many Westerners who came to Sri Ramanasramam in his lifetime.

Now more than half a century after the Maharshi's maha samadhi we are in a position to honestly survey what is happening to Ramana's teaching as it is assimilated into the contemporary western culture.

Like Zen Buddhism in the 1970's advaita has become the predominant fashion for western seekers. Why has it become so popular?

The appeal probably lies in the fact that its concepts can be approached by the rational mind, initially, without recourse to any spiritual orthodoxy. Also it does not require any change in life style and makes no external demands. The westerner is a rationalist and sceptical about the churches which appear largely out of touch with the modern generation. But a teaching from India, with exotic overtones, that does not make requirements is very attractive, in the new age culture. In addition, in the big cities, there have sprung up satsang communities built around appealing personalities who are gifted communicators and imply if not stating it outright that 'awakening has happened'.

These teachers, in the main having been given an ambiguous permission by H.W.L.Poonja to expound, have necessarily been forced to adapt the teachings to the needs of westerners eager for the attractions of so called 'enlightenment'.

Firstly many young people are disorientated by the competitive materialistic society in which they are born and need some therapeutic help. Secondly they are not versed in Indian scriptures or the Maharshi's own writings and welcome an attenuated version of the advaitic concepts. The metaphysical truths of the teaching are often overlooked and Self-enquiry is marginalised. As David Frawley and

others have pointed out Self-enquiry demands a spiritual practice initially as well as a degree of maturity.

The advaita teachers of the western world are by no means sages. Their accumulated vasanas are still observably active, and their self-termed awakening experiences are only glimpses of the Self. If they persevere with appropriate sadhanas some may eventually become realised. The argument often put against sadhana by many of the teachers, that it strengthens the ego, is false. Surrender and Self-enquiry are designed to undermine and eventually destroy the conditioned and inborn vasanas as well the ego. The support practices, such as meditation, japa, pranayama etc. are there to prepare those whose minds are too restless for Self-enquiry and lack the necessary attention and concentration. Paradoxically most of these teachers have undergone a deal of spiritual practice themselves.

Unless through Self-enquiry, self surrender and, if needed, the support practices offered by the Maharshi are continued, the vasanas and egotistic self-will cannot be burned out. Once they are, then there may be real liberation as a jivanmukta living in the 'no-mind' sahaja state. While the vasanas are active the teacher is still living, like the ajnani from his or her reflected consciousness and not from the absolute pure consciousness of the sage. They are still teaching from the mind, not living from 'no-mind'. The Maharshi was able to teach through silence. The 'ordinary-mind' needs to become devotional and satvic and lose its rajasic and tamasic tendencies. Then the satvic mind is able to surrender to the Self and eventually through grace become 'no-mind' I am the Self or Self-realised.

The contemporary teachers often adapt their teaching to a comfortable psychotherapy to meet their audiences 'I' demands. They earn their livelihoods by itinerant teaching wherever an audience may be found. They marginalise Self-enquiry, as being too difficult, or ignore it. At the best it is given in an attenuated form. They do however, succeed in undermining the sense of personal doership. and teach 'surrender' by sleight of hand through terms such as welcoming, embracing, being ok, accepting 'what is' etc. These term strip the teaching of its necessary devotional implications such as are

felt by surrender to 'God' or the 'Real Self'. Devotion is essential to open the Heart. It is not always understood that intellectual understanding alone is arid and leads nowhere except as a precursor to the necessary sadhana. To imply 'all' is only consciousness so do whatever you like, is a truncation and even a distortion of the Maharshi's great teachings. The injunction to give up spiritual practice is dangerous, as it allows the vasanas full permission to indulge, and could lead to the dead-end of Hedonism, or at best a parking space until the next 'satsang fix'. There is no grace without effort. One either wants an illusory but comfortable self-calming quietness, or one wants enlightenment.

But sometimes after attending endless teacher's satsangs some are led to the Maharshi, to find out what his real teaching truly IS. After attending, as an introduction, many different teachers, they find they are partially familiarised with many basic advaita concepts. The seeker may then mature to Bhagavan's highest teaching. Modern western advaita teachers do not give an overview of the advaita teaching, but only offer fragments from a sporadic question and answer technique, where humour and quick wittedness is sometimes predominant. Many are unfamiliar with the totality of Bhagavan's teaching and are not erudite in this respect. Bhagavan Sri Ramana is the source of their teachings and many claim his lineage. But hopefully they and their earnest adherents will spiritually ripen to the point of Self-realisation through the Maharshi's direct path, and through his guidance which is now perennially received by ardent devotees.

The westerner tries to get his finite mind around the infinite and finds it confusing. The western teachers and 'Californian gurus' do their best to ease the passage, but it is at best a half way house to the liberation of the Sage.

Ramana Maharshi is recognised as a supreme guru who sets a teaching for a millennium. By bringing Self-enquiry to the forefront he gave a new opportunity for those tired of the dream of samsara, who wishes to wake up from repetitive suffering. He wanted his teaching to 'Go west' hence his appearance to Paul Brunton. Perhaps

'the western teaching phenomenon' is part of the plan of totality to introduce advaita to westerners, but they must not let it stop there, for either the teachers or the seekers sake. ▲

KEYWORD

AHAM-VRITTI

Sanskrit: *Aham*: I. *Vritti*: Thought. *Aham-vritti*: 'I thought', the thought that 'I am an individual limited to my body-mind', the sense of ego or simply the 'I'.

Our life experiences rotate through the relentless cycle of three states – waking, dream and deep sleep. We feel that we are an individual, 'I', limited to our body-mind complex, in waking and dream states. Bhagavan calls this sense of ego as 'I thought'. This 'I thought' is absent in deep sleep.

Bhagavan defines mind as thoughts. Of all thoughts, the 'I thought' is the root thought. Hence mind is nothing but this 'I'¹. The world appears in waking and dream along with the mind and disappears in deep sleep when the mind disappears. Thus we can conclude the world is a projection of the mind.

Diverse thoughts appear and disappear sequentially in our mind. All these thoughts are known by 'I'. There can be no thought without this 'I thought' since they are known by 'I'. But 'I thought' can be

¹ *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, The Essence of Instructions, v.18.

there in the absence of other thoughts and knows that there are no thoughts.² This is the basic and vital difference between 'I thought' and other thoughts. Bhagavan therefore compares this 'I thought' to the thread passing through all pearls in a chain.

A ball of iron in its intrinsic nature is not radiant.³ When heated in fire, the iron ball becomes hot and glows giving a false notion of radiant iron ball. It takes on the nature of fire within the narrow limits of the iron ball's size. Similarly 'I' is a spurious entity, Bhagavan says, having the nature of awareness 'I' 'I', but limited to the size of the body. 'I' is therefore the limited reflection of unlimited 'I' 'I', our Self-nature, the reality.

'I thought' has the vital clue for breaking the inexorable cycle of waking, dream and sleep. So long our attention is on objects, the subject 'I' expands and hides as it were, its source 'I' 'I'. When we turn our attention to 'I', the subject, it wanes and subsides into 'I' 'I'. Bhagavan says that like a dog which tracks his master by tracing his scent, ignoring everything else, we should trace 'I' 'I', our real nature, by turning our attention away from the objects and focus it on the subject 'I'. "So then, the search for the source of the *aham-vritti* is not merely the search for the basis of one of the forms of the ego but for the very Source itself from which arises the 'I-am'-ness. In other words, the quest for and the realisation of the source of the ego in the form of *aham-vritti* necessarily implies the transcendence of the ego in every one of its possible forms."⁴

Aham-vritti creates the world and associated problems; but it has the solution by leading us to our Self-nature, immortality, freedom and bliss. The solution is in the very problem of who we think we are. "This is the sum and substance of all that an aspirant needs to know. What is imperatively required of him is an earnest and one-pointed enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*", says Bhagavan.⁵ ▲

² *Maharshi's Gospel*, Book II, Chapter 6, Aham and Aham-vritti.

³ Sri Maharshi's *Words of Grace, Self Enquiry*, Chapter-IV, The Ego.

⁴ *Maharshi's Gospel. Op. Cit.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Ulladu Narpadu

Based on Lakshmana Sharma's Commentary

verse three

S. RAM MOHAN

Introduction:

THE sacred lore and some of the gurus (mainly Advaitic) who were sages teach that the World is unreal, without Consciousness and full of sufferings and miseries, so that the disciples might turn their minds away from it, inwards — it is not for them to remain content with that knowledge of the unreality of the Self but to attain the experience of the Truth of the Self and thereafter remain in that state of right awareness. Therefore one, who without striving by the proper means for winning that Experience, remains content with saying that the World is unreal, unconscious and a source of miseries is no better than the one who says the opposite, namely that the world is real, Conscious and full of happiness. This is expounded in this verse.

Verse 3

What is the good of (merely) saying ‘The World is real’, ‘it is illusory’, ‘The World is conscious,’ ‘it is inert,’ ‘it is full of happiness:’ ‘it is full of sufferings etc.?’ What all alike really want (knowingly or otherwise), is the Egoless State, wherein there are no disputes about Unity or Diversity, and which is to be won by turning away from the world and becoming aware (by experience) of the truth of one’s own Self.¹

Commentary:

There are two assertions, namely that the World is unreal and that it is real. There are two other assertions, — that it is inert and that it is conscious. And there are two more: that it is miserable and that it is conducive for happiness. So there are six assertions about the world. These six can be reduced into two assertions; one is that the world is unreal, inert and miserable; the other is that it is real, conscious and full of happiness. The first of these is the view of the Advaita Vedanta. It is this view that is taught in the text books of the Advaitins and by the sages who have had direct Experience of the Real Self. Here also in this verse the same teaching is to be found. What is the true inwardness of this teaching? Is it enough for us just to accept the teaching and entertain it as a strong conviction and go on preaching it to others? Does a man attain his goal by this alone?

The purpose of all this teaching, according to Bhagavan, is just this: That unalloyed, perfect happiness which we all want and need is not to be had in and through the world, through the objects of enjoyments. Only the happiness (ananda) which is the very nature of the Real Self in his natural state can fully satisfy our need, and for Its sake one must renounce the world, with all its pleasures and turn the mind inwards towards the Heart and thus win for ourselves that eternal and complete happiness which is our own nature; that is, we

¹ The facts of the biography which concern Bhagavan’s attainment of the Experience of the real Self would appear as facts only from the standpoint of the world. The truth of the matter from the standpoint of the sage is not so, as will be seen later. But biography usually follows the world appearance; and it is the version of the events that is given here as an example.

must strive for It persistently by the sadhana prescribed by Bhagavan. If one does not care to make this effort, then for him what practical difference does it make whether he believes the world to be real and satisfying or not? It is all the same for him, whether he be a believer in the Advaitic Teaching or in the Dvaitic.

What we all ardently desire is happiness, absolute, uninterrupted by spells of suffering and sorrow. But such happiness has not been attained by us in this world. Nor is there any reasonable hope that we can attain it in the world at any time in the future. In the world, happiness is hindered by the mental moods of intense desire, fears and so on. The mind is rooted in the ego. Hence it follows that pure and satisfying happiness can be had only in the egoless state and not in any other.

We blindly believe that happiness comes to us from the objects of desire that we see in the world. Our own worldly experience itself is sufficient to prove that this belief is based on ignorance. If it were true that happiness comes from outside objects, those having an abundance of them must be more happy, those that have very little of them must be much less happy, and in states where objects are non-existent there must be no happiness at all. Actually we find that poor persons, whose possessions of the ‘means of happiness’ are negligible are much happier than the very rich, who have an abundance of them. Besides in the state of deep sleep, where these means of pleasure are totally absent, it happens that every one who is blessed with sound sleep is most happy. The man who wakes up from sound sleep says: ‘I slept happily,’ thus manifests a memory of the happiness which he enjoyed in sleep. So it is clear that happiness is not from objects. Herein we need to make a distinction between happiness which is uncaused, being natural to the Self, and pleasures which arise only when pleasurable objects are being enjoyed.

The question will now arise, ‘Wherefrom comes the happiness that we do enjoy in some measure, more or less?’ Both the sages and Upanishads declare that happiness is the very nature of the Real Self that dwells in each of us. The objection will be raised, ‘If so, why do we not enjoy that happiness without interruption all the time?’

In waking and in dream we have some degree of happiness broken by intervals of misery or absence of that happiness; only in sound sleep do we enjoy uninterrupted continuous happiness. From this, we must infer that in waking and dream there is some cause that obstructs or hinders our access to the Source of happiness, and that in deep sleep that obstructing cause is for the time being absent. This obstructing medium is variously identified as mind or ego. These hindrances are present and active in waking and dream, but absent in sound sleep. The thought 'I am so and so' identifying with a particular body-mind complex is the ego; this will be expounded later. There is the fact that in sound sleep there is no world. From this we may safely conclude that the appearance of the world also is a hindrance to our being happy in those two states. But it is an observed fact that the world appears only when the ego and the mind are present and active, not in their absence as in deep sleep. Also when there is no world-appearance, neither is there the ego or the mind. It will be explained in a latter verse that the ego/mind and the world arise and act together.

It is undeniable that the world is trivial, and it not a means of happiness. Only the real Self is the source of all happiness and is itself the inexhaustible happiness. This is not only what all the gurus teach us, it is also corroborated by reasoning based on experience in the world. Hence what we need to win is awareness of that Self, and for its sake the world should be renounced.

It is a fact that we cannot engage in the practice of the means of attaining Awareness of that Self without renouncing — turning away from — the world. On this point there need be no doubt, as will be seen later. To obtain the Self we must turn the mind inwards, concentrating the mind on the path of sadhana. Inwardness and one pointedness of the mind are impossible unless we give up the outward looking mental habit. Giving up the world is identical with the cessation of the outgoing tendency of the mind. This has been indicated here by the words 'turning away from the world'.

Since thus it is plain that for the sake of the goal of life we need to renounce the world, it is immaterial for us, whether the world is real

or not. Why then should we make a scrutiny of the world? Whatever might be the conclusion we arrive at through scrutiny, even after the inquiry is finished, the fact remains that the world is of no value for our main purpose, namely the realisation of happiness. Bhagavan says, "Why not renounce this world at once, without making this inquiry?" This renunciation, which after all we shall have to make, can be made now, without entering into the inquiry. Thus it is shown that the inquest into the reality or otherwise of the world is irrelevant and totally unnecessary. Engaging in this inquiry concerning the world which sometime or other has to be renounced, says Bhagavan, is like making a careful scrutiny of the mass of shaven hair, which after all is to be thrown away.

But the disciple who would withdraw the mind from the world and engage it in the search for the Truth of the Self, needs a refined and purified mind. That is to say, he must have very intense devotion to the Real Self, and correspondingly be mentally detached from the world which is inimical to success in the pursuit of that Quest. Such a one can at once take to the inquiry taught here, without going through the inquiry about the world. Bhagavan says that to such a one the Experience of the real Self will come easily; this will be evident from the biography of Bhagavan himself.

This state of right awareness which is easily won by the highest category of disciples who are perfectly free from worldly attachments, is beyond all scope of controversy. This meaning is conveyed in the text by the words 'Wherein there are no disputes about unity or diversity.' That is to say, it is not possible to say of this state that It is one of Advaita or of Dvaita, because the one who could entertain such views, the ego, is not there at all. This sense is conveyed by the word 'the egoless State.'

Bhagavan means in this verse by the word 'What all alike really want', is that really all people love and crave only for this State; that there will be nobody who does not want it, But it can be asked how can this be a fact, when the great majority of people do not know of the very existence of this State. The significance of this statement made by Bhagavan in this verse was explained by himself as follows:

“All men alike love the state of deep, restful sleep, because it is a state of happiness, which is Peace. The two features that are common to this state and that of right awareness, the natural state, wherein there is no ego are the following: In neither does the ego-sense arise; both are states of ego-lessness. In both there is no world-appearance.

“And it is these two features that make the State of sound sleep blissful. Thus it is clear that the natural state is by no means inferior to the state of deep sleep. Of course the former is infinitely superior, because, in sleep the ego and the mind, the causes of unhappiness are not extinct, but remain in latency, merged in the darkness of the primordial ignorance. Whatever happiness there is in sleep is comparatively very little. In the experience of the real Self the mind had become dissolved and merged into the real Self, and hence there is not only no mind nor ego having become once for all extinct, they cannot revive, as they do on awaking from sleep, and hence bondage and worldly life are at end for ever more. The bliss of that state is infinite, so that desires can no more arise. Thus the natural state — the state of deliverance — is infinitely more desirable than that of sleep. Those that love sleep, therefore, cannot say that they do not care for the Supreme State. If they say so, it would be meaningless, due to their ignorance.” Hence the statement made here by Bhagavan, that all alike love only this state, is absolutely correct. This is also the teaching of the Advaitic lore.

Ultimately, various theories and concepts are merely the projections of a restless mind. Ultimate Awareness is not attained through dialectic. All the propositions ‘World is real’, ‘World is unreal’ etc. are expressions of opinion. The Buddha declares in the Majjhima Nikaya LXL: ‘Opinion, O disciple, is a disease He who has overcome all opinions, O disciples, is called a saint, one who knows.’ Bhagavan teaches us that there is no use in endlessly discussing opinions. He declares, “Turn the mind inwards and enquire. Then the mind dies.” ▲

Images

KATYA OSBORNE

WE spend much of our lives presenting an image to the world. The representation of the person we would prefer to be, or the one we think we are. Sometimes the image is so polished and well worked that it obscures whatever reality lies beneath. The curious thing is that very few people are fooled by the veneer that has taken such hard work to create; in fact the person most likely to be fooled is the one who is behind the façade. The jolly fellow with a smile for everyone, but inside is filled with anger. He will find it hard to get rid of the anger as long as it lurks unacknowledged below the surface. The gracious lady who is terrified that the world might see her as someone who has struggled and fought to rise out of an unsavoury start in life. More than likely she would be deeply admired if she allowed people to do so. Or even the saintly character who is hiding a bunch of sins. Why try so hard when most of those that he is trying to fool have multiple sins of their own and would probably rather

Katya Osborne is the daughter of Arthur Osborne who founded *The Mountain Path* and authored many books on Bhagavan. She grew up in Tiruvannamalai.

ask for help and understanding from another sinner. Of course these examples are very simplistic and human beings are, for the most part, pretty complex, but nonetheless the general premise holds true. Many people come to believe that their deception represents the truth, although there are some who, when faced with the evidence, immediately strive to remove the smokescreen and get at the real person inside it. This takes a special type of courage; the brand that will recognise a lifelong defect and be prepared to deal with it instead of justifying it, and also be prepared to face those he has been trying to fool and deal with them.

The true guru has no artificial persona to be presented to the world, his reality is palpable and in many ways that is what we admire and are drawn to in the first instance. We become devotees and learn from one we trust with our inner welfare. Sadly, some people are so desperate for guidance that they fall in with a teacher who has neither the knowledge nor status to teach properly, in other words a person who presents a face that has fooled the public; or even worse, they find themselves at the mercy of a self-serving 'guru' who wants to equip himself with the glamorous goods of this world and cynically sees his disciples as victims.

How lucky we are to be under the aegis of Bhagavan. He was, as a human being, stripped of all artificiality and in a sense he was childlike in his behaviour. There is a difference between childlike and childish. As children we can behave quite naturally in a way that would be either affected or unsuitable in an adult.

When my brother Adam was about four years old he was sucking a sweet when he came running into the hall to tell Bhagavan something. Bhagavan asked him if he was enjoying his sweet and Adam, without a thought, took it out of his mouth and offered to put it into Bhagavan's hand. There was a gasp of shock from the orthodox individuals around, but Bhagavan understood the spirit in which the offering was made and smiled at Adam. He said something along the lines of "No, no, you keep it." Completely unbothered Adam popped the sweet back in his mouth and went on with what he wanted to say. That whole episode has the charm of complete

childish honesty, but could not be attempted by an adult without seeming bizarre or contrived. Equally guileless was the incident when my sister Frania, a year younger than Adam, came tottering unsteadily into the hall wearing a cloth which someone had draped on her like a mini sari. She wanted to show Bhagavan her new finery. I am reminded that all of us children used, as a matter of course, to come and show Bhagavan or tell him of anything interesting that came into our lives and although this time Bhagavan smiled sweetly at her, many people laughed. Frania got very annoyed at this and ripped off the sari which she left on the floor while she ran out in her knickers. Children have not yet developed the desire to seriously impress the world by being someone other than themselves. They do not wear a mask to hide behind, all that comes later as we grow up and become discontented with whatever look and personality we have been issued with originally. We don't like the original and so we try to hide behind some sort of camouflage that we feel suits us better. Could 'Who am I?' work from the outside in, one wonders?

There is a story about a lazy fellow who came to a village where people were known for their piety. He decided that he would sit under a tree in silence and wait to be fed. It worked so well for him that the days flowed into weeks, months and eventually years passed. He became the village saint and was fed and clothed by the entire community. At last he decided to speak and words of great wisdom fell from his lips. He had spent so much time in self-enforced contemplation that he had achieved real understanding! That may be like someone with handwriting that, when analysed, reveals him to be an egoist, or greedy...or both. He makes an effort to change his writing and then finds that his character has altered to suit the calligraphy. Could that be I wonder? Is the chanting of mantras or the performing of rituals something that one hopes will work along those lines? Or perhaps we just have to try to find in ourselves the spirit of childhood before our eyes were clouded by ego-consciousness; the spirit of truth that we are born with.

When I was a little girl of around eight years of age I was playing on the hill when Bhagavan came walking down with a number of

people around him. Looking at him I was filled with such an overwhelming feeling of love that I burst out with:

“Bhagavan, I love you so much.” There were coos of approval from those around and I thought that they were approving of me without knowing how naughty I could be. I didn't want unearned praise so I hastily added:

“Of course I love the monkeys too.” Gasps of shock naturally followed. The wonderful thing about being around Bhagavan was that one knew that he could see into our hearts. Bhagavan knew exactly what I meant and he just laughed and walked on. I had not yet developed the need for a persona and the precise truth was therefore most important. Adults who spoke in such a manner however could rarely be genuine. The impression created by someone trying to achieve childish innocence is, more often than not, merely embarrassing.

When I was young I noticed that a number of visitors to the ashram were, to put it kindly, extremely odd. The ones who allowed the ego complete freedom to behave in any outrageous, self-indulgent way they chose, and justified this lack of restriction with the excuse of insanity, got no sympathy whatsoever from Bhagavan. He ignored them.

The real 'I' that we are looking for is not clothed in any sort of illusion; neither that of style nor that of spurious spirituality. The 'saintly' look can be just as much of a snare as the glitter of worldliness. In fact specious sanctity is a particularly prevalent chimera amongst those who yearn to be spiritual guides in the ambit of a true guru; so many of these people seem to indulge in pious posturing. The image that they create, consciously or not, is finely calculated to deceive the earnest disciple. Fortunately it is often not even very harmful, except perhaps to the one offering advice, and can lead him to developing an enormously inflated ego which is fed by a steady diet of worship. The image of 'spiritual adviser' in this case has heavily overlaid that of the seeker. The devotees however can often benefit to the degree of their own sincerity, although they obviously cannot learn from this type of teacher more than he has to give.

Bhagavan has said (I paraphrase) that we are not striving to reach a goal, we are already there; we just have to get rid of the illusions that cloud our minds and then get rid of the mind.

S.S.Cohen quotes Bhagavan as saying, “Yes, the Guru does not bring about Self-realisation, but simply removes the obstacles to it. The Self is always realised.....”¹

We have it all within our grasp at the outset and we assiduously cover it up with false images. The trouble is that a child, although it has a lot of qualities that we may envy, is not an adult and usually cannot appreciate the desirability of abandoning the ego in favour of Self-realisation. In fact many adults cannot appreciate this either. Very often we inwardly qualify our aspirations with some sort of almost unacknowledged stipulation that allows us to retain certain aspects of our 'individuality' that we cannot imagine being without. Often this caveat actually refers to an 'image' we have created that has taken us even further from the truth. I suppose that the trick is to recognise what is superimposed and then to try to strip it away without changing one set of images for another. When I was about ten years old my idea of heaven was to own a watch, a torch and a fountain pen. Of course when that day eventually came I discovered that I didn't really want them so much after all, but other acquisitions were now much more important and heaven was still out of reach. It is no use just changing our aspirations; we have to abandon the unreal image in favour of the truth.

I offer none of this as advice. I am not qualified to give advice. Neither am I propounding a path to follow. I am not qualified to do that either. I am merely speculating. It is tempting to do that when one is unsure of how to follow a spiritual path. I have never been able to truly meditate, inasmuch as I find it well nigh impossible to actually still the mind for more than a few minutes at best. Sitting with closed eyes in the hall does not necessarily mean that the mind isn't ticking away somewhere inside. Mine usually is. Sitting in a yogic pose is possibly a matter of practice. And yet there are people

¹ *Reflections on Talks*, Chapter nine, page 96.

who can do it, and do it genuinely, which is much rarer. I worry also that there are so many words written to elucidate Bhagavan's teaching, and the same text often mentions that he taught in silence! Sometimes I wonder if a lot of the words are mere embellishment along the lines of writing... 'at this moment in time'... when we mean ... 'now.' 'Now' is what we want to say but 'at this moment in time' sounds more interesting perhaps, or just more words? Is festooning with verbiage another form of camouflage? Is breaking down any statement into its component parts a help or merely an indulgence? A beautiful flower can be analysed botanically. It can be dissected and every part named. Petals, sepals, pistil, stamens and so on. One then has every component of the flower scrutinized and evaluated and a treatise can be written on it, but what happened to the beauty and the scent that have been lost? A flower is definitely greater than the sum of its parts, but I suppose that we also need a botanical study in order to examine and learn, segment by segment if that is our preference. Of course it is hard to know how Bhagavan's message could be passed on *without* the benefit of the written word, perhaps one should follow where he is pointing rather than worshipping the signposts along the way.

It is probable that different types of people need and respond to different sorts of discipline. I think Bhagavan had a recipe for everyone, whatever their limitations. He certainly had an enormous cross section amongst his devout devotees. There were intellectuals and some who could barely read. There were business men and sadhus and every shade in between. There were doctors and lawyers and pundits; singers and dancers and artists. There was at least one representative of almost every religion; there were Hindus yes, but also Buddhists and Muslims and Christians and Jews and Parsis and more. There were, and still are, people from almost every country in the world. In one day I have met people from Iceland, Israel and Ireland for example. Anyone who came, or comes to him now can find solace and insight if that is what they want, for the Sadguru is the one who dwells everlastingly in Truth and can help anyone who sincerely wishes for it. ▲

Ghazals of Hafiz

NAWAZUDDIN

SHAMSUDDIN MOHAMED HAFIZ was born around 1320 and died about 1389. He was born and spent most of his life in southern Iran at Shiraz. He had a natural poetic gift and was recognised and admired at the time by a society in which poetry was a serious and highly valued craft. He often was in conflict with the established order, the narrow-minded conservative and orthodox to the point that at one time he lived in exile. During the long unstable mid period of his life he suffered deeply when his very existence, let alone his career, was in jeopardy. This affected the tone of his ghazals which contain a wisp of melancholy.

Hafiz is the national poet of Iran and even today he is habitually quoted in everyday conversation. His subtlety of thought and matchless dictum has earned him the honorific "Lisan al ghaib" — Interpreter of mysteries.

From my reading of Hafiz for over three decades, I should say I had enough from the fountain of Hafiz. But with Hafiz if you drink

Nawazuddin lives in Tiruvannamalai. He works in a local bank since 1974. In his spare time he devotes himself to the study of Sufism into which he was initiated by his father Rafiudin.

from his fountain one discovers more food for thought.

Hafiz speaks on different levels of understanding. We believe it is not of our own volition that we have adopted this life. It has been assigned to us. All religions have this idea of the Creator. In Hinduism the Controller is called the *Sutradari* who designs or makes the idea of our existence and who executes these ideas according to his own liking. Lord Krishna is such a one.

Each religion believes there is a superpower who controls our actions and affairs, both personal and universal. Hafiz emphasises that superpower in his ghazals. He says:

‘Let us see how this game takes its course. In the checkerboard even the king does not have any power.’

When I commune with Hafiz, I can go on reading and rereading because to read Hafiz is to be at one with life.

The other beauty with Hafiz is he is like the fabled mirror of Jamshed in which you can see everything. If you think of something you can see it whatever and wherever it may be. Reading Hafiz is like holding up the same mystic mirror. When I feel disturbed and confused, I open Hafiz. On whatever page I randomly open, the verses speak exactly of my condition. Even today in Iran it is quite common for a person who is in a dilemma to randomly open Hafiz and find the answer they need.

Normally Hafiz has an undertone of melancholy. To me the best music in which we can immerse ourselves has this undertone. This is because in every human being the unfulfilled part of the cycle or circle of the individual is the major portion. Whenever Hafiz ghazals speak about the unfulfilled part of himself we naturally feel an empathy and in this aspect of the mundane Hafiz speaks directly to our heart.

Hafiz often talks of wine. He boasts his body is composed of primordial wine. This particular wine is the ardent love of the creature towards his creator, the Creator.

In Islamic Sufism, the Sufi path starts with the conviction of duality where the *abd* (servant) is in bondage to the *rab* (Lord). This is in every religion: the lord and the servant, slave or *jiva*. But as one

progresses on this path, you are so attracted by the *rab*, your form of the Creator, that the seeker totally annihilates his form. The attraction of the *rab* makes the *abd* oblivious of his own form. This union takes place in any seeker for a fraction of a moment. This belief, this experience of forgetting his form, this blissful state doesn't last forever but the effect of this blissful moment compels the seeker to go again and seek to recapture this moment.

When Hafiz speaks of the separation from that blissful moment when he recognises and remembers his enlightened form, we feel a recognition of our own predicament. This is how Hafiz's poetry is to be interpreted when he speaks of the separation from his Beloved.

What kind of uproar is this
 I see in this lunatic sphere?
 I see the whole world in turmoil, very much disturbed!
 Everybody seeks better times from the world
 The trouble is, I see every day getting worse!
 While fools are provided with refreshments
 I see the wise sweat blood to get their sustenance.
 The race horse is overburdened by the pack-saddle
 The donkeys are adorned with golden collars, I see.
 Daughters are very much in conflict
 With their mothers
 And I see every son spiteful towards his father.
 No brother is compassionate towards another
 Neither father shows affection to his son, I see.
 O master, listen to the counsel of Hafiz:
 Go and do good.
 I reckon this is more precious than pearls and jewels.



Where are the glad tidings of union that
 I may sacrifice my life forthwith and arise.
 I am a homing bird of celestial origin and
 I shall rise setting free the snares of this world.
 Oh God, send showers from the clouds of guidance
 Before, like a dust, I rise up and be scattered.
 If you declare me as your slave, I swear by your love
 I shall rise to renounce the kingdom of the world.
 Upon my grave do not stay without wine and music
 So I may rise dancing by your fragrance.
 Hold me in your tight embrace for one night
 I may emerge as a youth in the morning from your side.
 Don't you think that I shall leave the dust of your street
 Even if I am oppressed by heaven
 And the high handedness of the world.
 I shall never abandon your street so long as I am alive
 Even if I have to deal with my life, I shall give it up
 Rather than your street.
 O you full of grace and elegance,
 Show me your beautiful face.
 Like Hafiz, I shall rise renouncing both
 My life and the world.



It is Spring, so strive to be cheerful
 Many flowers will blossom
 And you would be in the dust.
 The lute is counselling you secretly
 However sermons would benefit you,
 Only when you are capable.
 I don't advise you with whom you should sit
 What you should drink
 You would know—if you are intelligent!
 Every leaf in the garden
 Is a register of one's state,
 Pity if you remain ignorant of such details.
 Though the path to the friend is arduous
 Going would be easy if you are familiar
 With the destination.
 The concern for worldly affairs
 Would merely ruin your stock of life
 If you are engaged in its futile efforts day and night.
 If lofty fortune comes to your aid, O Hafiz
 You would become the prey of that virtuous beloved.



O ascetic, go away and invite me not
 To the pleasures of paradise
 Primordially, God has not created me for that purpose.

He shall not gather even a grain
 From the harvest of Existence
 Who has not sown the seeds of annihilation
 In the path of Truth.

You: with rosary and prayer-mat
 On the road to abstinence and devotion
 Me: with tavern and conch
 On the road to temple and synagogue.

O empty Sufi, withhold not the wine from me,
 Because the Savant
 On the day of creation has leavened my clay
 With pure wine.

The worthless Sufi cannot be blessed with paradise
 Because, he has not pledged the rags in the tavern, like me.

The pleasures of huris and the banks of paradise
 Can never be gained by him
 Who has let go the beloved's raiment from his hand.

O Hafiz, if the mercy of God is bestowed on you
 You shall be free from the misery of hell
 And the pleasures of heaven.



If God is to seize anybody for each of his sins
 Earth would weep and the world would moan.

On the surface of the earth you commit a sin
 And are not afraid
 Whereas in the sky the moon is afflicted by the adversities
 Of evil deeds.

One of these nights I shall cry so profusely of my sins
 That grass will grow from the place of my worship.

Before the sovereign monarch a blade of grass and a
 Mountain are alike
 Sometimes He does not care for a mountain
 Sometimes He censures even a blade of grass.

So greatly shall I weep at the farewell of my friend
 That wherever he proceeds to
 My tears will hinder his path.

You are virtuous, how could you be evil:
 On Doomsday you shall be spared of accountability.

O Hafiz, when the king has resolved to take away
 The hearts of the afflicted
 Who has the courage to prevent him from doing
 What he intends?



O preacher, go away and attend to your duties,
 What kind of plaintive is this?
 My heart has fallen down miserably,
 What have you lost?

Till I attain my desire from the lips of the beloved
 The counsel of the whole world is nothing
 But wind in the reeds.

God created the beauty of my beloved from nought
 This delicate mystery no created being
 Has unfolded yet.
 The beggar of your street is unconcerned
 With the eight-fold paradise
 The captive of your prison is free in both the worlds.

Although the frenzy of your love has ruined me
 The very foundation of my existence
 Prospers on this misery.

O heart, complain not about the cruelty of the beloved
 The friend has assigned this as your share
 And it should be fair.

Do not be captivated by the blandishments
 Of this senile world, because
 Whoever has concurred with it remains unhappy.

O counsellor, censure not those who drink the dreg
 The Sustainer has allotted this as their daily bread.

O Hafiz, no more stories and spells
 This sort of stories and spells, a great deal of it—
 I too remember.



Nowadays if any companion is free from vices
 It is the goblet of pure wine and the book of verses.
 Walk alone, for the passage to safety is narrow
 Hold the cup, because sweet life is matchless.

I am not the only person who is sad in this world
 For neglecting his duties
 Even scholars of erudition are in grief
 For not practising their faith.
 Look at this tumultuous world, examine it carefully
 The world and its affairs are unstable and unreal.

I was eagerly expecting to behold your beautiful face
 But death was an even more hopeful robber.

The darkened face of those destined to be wretched
 Can never become white by cleansing: this is a maxim.

Catch hold of the curly tresses of a lovely face
 And stop telling stories:
 “Fortune and misfortune are the effects of
 Venus and Saturn”.

Every edifice that you look at is susceptible to collapse
 However the foundation of love is free from defects.

They would never find him solemn and sober,
 Not in any age
 Because our Hafiz is drunk with the primordial wine.



None has beheld your beautiful face
 And your suitors are many
 You are still a burgeoning bud, and
 Your nightingales are many.

It is no wonder that I landed in your street
 Like me thousands are roaming in your territory.

Even though I am at a distance from you,
 Let God dispel nobody from you
 My hope of union with you is very close.

Every place of worship is adorned by its name
 Be it a temple, a cross, a monk or a wooden gong.

Love is not concerned with
 The proviso of shrine or tavern
 Whatever be the place there is
 The splendour of the beloved's face.

Where is a lover on whom
 The beloved has not cast her glance?
 O master, there is no sickness at all, otherwise
 The physician is readily available.

The entire lamentation of Hafiz is not idle talk
 It is a rare narrative and a strange story too.



Missing Joseph shall return to Kan'an,
 Grieve not.
 The cottage of sorrow shall one day become
 A garden of roses, grieve not.

The afflicted heart shall become cheerful,
 Don't despair
 And the agitated mind will be adorned with peace,
 Grieve not.

If the spring of life continues to exist near the garden
 O birds of prosperity, you shall once again be crowned
 With a canopy of roses, grieve not.

Don't be despondent since you are ignorant
 Of the mysteries of the unseen
 Behind the curtains myriads of stakes take place,
 Grieve not.

At times when the turn of events
 Do not agree with our hopes
 The vicissitudes of life has never
 Remained the same, grieve not.

If the desire of the Ka'ba draws you to the wilderness
 And the thistles of babul dissuade you, grieve not.

Whoever wanders miserably in search of an ally
 Shall eventually be led to his comforter, grieve not.

The agony of separation from the beloved
 And the harassment of the foe
 The Omniscient knows the plight of our hearts,
 Grieve not.

O heart, if the deluge of annihilation uproots
 The foundations of your existence;
 Since your navigator is Noah, about storms,
 Grieve not.

Though the destination is perilous
 And the objective invisible
 There does not yet exist a road without end,
 Grieve not.

O Hafiz, in the secluded corner of thy piety and
 In the privacy of cimmerian darkness
 So long as you maintain the litanies of prayer and
 The recital of Koran, grieve not.



Years have passed since the beloved
 Has sent a communication.
 Neither has written a note nor sent a greeting.

I have sent a hundred letters and that royal cavalier
 Neither dispatched an envoy nor a message.

Towards me who is mad and uncivilised
 She has not sent any stylish deer or a nimble pheasant.

She knew that my soul's bird wants to fly away
 However she did not send the net of those curly tresses.

O dear, that sweet-lipped inebriated cupbearer
 Knew that I am drunk
 And did not send any more cups.

I boasted about miracles and spiritual stations
 However, he did not send notice of any such stations.

O Hafiz, show respect,
 There is nothing to be accounted for
 If the king has not sent a message to any of his slaves.



The rose has blossomed
 And the nightingale is drunk with joy
 O lovers of intoxication raise the call of exhilaration:
 Spring has arrived.

The foundation of repentance seemed firm like a rock
 Look! how a goblet of glass has shattered it into pieces.

Bring wine, because in the palace of contentment
 Where is the distinction between
 A sentinel and a king? A sober and a drunk.

From this double-doored caravansarai
 When we are certain to depart
 What is a lofty archway of life
 And what is low?
 The state of luxury is not easy to attain except by toil
 On the day of creation I accepted the treaty of love.

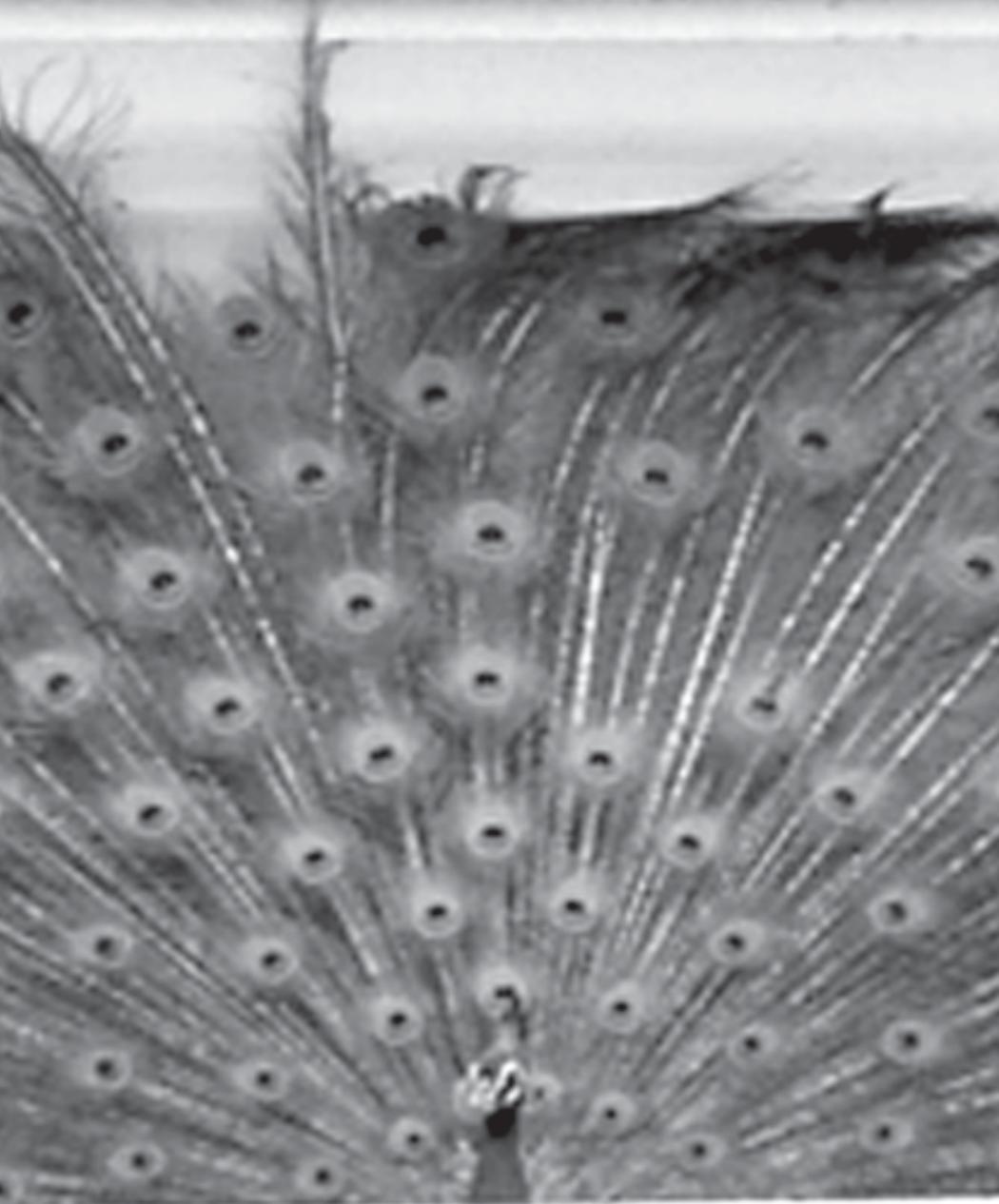
Don't torment your heart with existence
 And non-existence
 Because, whatever seems to be perfect,
 In the end would be nought.

The majesty of Asif, the flying sedan and
 The discourses of the birds
 Everything is destroyed and the master was not
 Benefited in any manner.

Don't stray from the path
 For the sake of wing and feather
 The flight of bowshot arrow, though splendid on the air,
 Ultimately settles on the ground.

O Hafiz, how could the tip of the pen expound your
 Gratitude to the beloved
 Because, the beloved's word is received by people
 With due respect as a gift.





The Power of Our Sensations — World Creation

HANS HEIMER

MODERN science has investigated the nature of our sensory faculties from many different angles. Biology under the headings of anatomy and physiology, has examined animals and humans, with special reference to the nervous system and the brain. Medicine, psychology and psychiatry have investigated the mind-body relationship from conception to death, from health to illness, from normal to deficient. Since the invention and development of the computer, a new branch of science and engineering has been devoted to the problem of artificial intelligence and in so doing, has been forced to define and re-examine human intelligence, cognition and behaviour. Philosophy also, since its inception in the East and in the West, has advanced theories based on the available evidence of the period, and modified those theories as new facts became available.

Hans Heimer is a retired professional engineer who came to England in 1939 as a Jewish refugee from Vienna. He has spent a lifetime studying religion, philosophy and science and was introduced to Vedanta by John Levy, a disciple of Sri Krishna Menon who is also known as Atmananda.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, a new branch of knowledge called cognitive science, which incorporates aspects from all the abovementioned disciplines, has sprung up. An enormous amount of work has been done in universities and laboratories to investigate cognition and consciousness, producing scientific papers and books. The tools for these investigations have become evermore refined, especially in the study of the human body, human perception and behaviour. The science of the nervous system, called neurology, aided by computerised scanning and imaging, has produced a wealth of information about the physical aspects of cognition and the correlation of these with the mental aspects. However, the electrical and chemical processes and the physical constitution of the nervous system, especially the sensory organs and the brain, are so complex, that there is no one who claims to understand it all. There are many theories, but no agreement on a single theory. Nevertheless, there is much of interest to the followers of Vedanta in these theories, as some of these findings confirm and amplify the teachings of the seers and sages of that tradition.

Average adults believe themselves to be individuals, with more or less independence, living in an external world, containing innumerable other living and non-living objects, from the microscopic to the macroscopic, residents on the planet Earth, in an infinite universe. This belief is developed in us from childhood and in most cases it stays with us till the day we die. The newborn infant does not speak any language, but has life supporting instincts like hunger, desire for love and curiosity. The concepts of the ego 'I', internal and external, the world of space and time, do not exist for the infant and are only acquired after years of development. Many of the processes of our intellectual growth are unconscious or very short, thus leaving no trace in our memory. Other items of our childhood development we have mostly forgotten and therefore as adults we take the aforementioned concepts for granted. As adults we take the 'I' to be our body and mind, with the skin of our body forming the border with the world, which by the process of differentiation we consider as the 'not-I'.

Our bodies contain sense organs, which the common sense point of view causes us to believe, convey messages from an independent external world to our mind, via the nervous system including its major organ, the brain. We believe the brain to be the interface between our body and our mind, and we assume that somehow our mind is enclosed in, or attached to, our head. These common sense beliefs, held more or less by the majority of the scientific community, have been the basis of the modern investigation into cognition and consciousness, the study now called cognitive science.

The sense of seeing is the most powerful of the sensations, it occupies nearly half of the outer folded layer of the brain, called the cortex. The action of seeing, which to us seems to be so simple and effortless, turns out on detailed investigation, to be among the most complex systems of a human being. It involves the whole body with its other sensory systems, the mind with all its faculties, and the whole life history of the individual, from conception and birth to adulthood. Vision and the other senses, are not matters of an effortless or passive perception, but are intelligent processes of active construction and creation, based on many years of growth and learning. The more courageous members of the scientific community have therefore concluded that the traditional common sense view of cognition is erroneous and needs to be replaced. Their conclusion is that the process of cognition does not involve our mental representation of an existing external world. Rather does it involve the creation of a world, and our bodies and our selves are part of that created world. The world is created by our sensory faculties, and this includes all our concepts and theories about ourselves and the world. This profoundly earth-shaking conclusion is based on the extensive scientific investigation of our sensory apparatus, on how mind and body develop together from infancy to adulthood and on how illness or malfunctions of this apparatus change our world.

The investigations which have led science to these conclusions, can be summarised in a number of ways. Some of these investigations date from as long ago as the Renaissance, but the computer has played a significant part in items c) and d):

a) Drawings, paintings, mirrors, photographs, cinema, television; all these on flat surfaces give us the impression of three dimensions and the last two, the illusory impression of seamless continuity.

b) Optical illusions and puzzles, such as geometric figures which at first appearance give one impression to the seer and then for no apparent reason, change in an instant to a different impression. Our sensory faculty is relying on memory to select and construct a figure, but then finds an alternative memory to change the construct, without any apparent effort on our part.

c) Defects in our perception caused from birth or accidents, showing that shortcomings in our sensory apparatus lead to misconceptions. Studies of these problems lead us to a better understanding of our normal sensory apparatus. One example is phantom limbs, where a limb has been lost, but still causes pain or irritation as if the limb had never been removed. A second one is recovery of sight after having been blind from infancy, where the process of learning to see, takes place in an adult as opposed to an infant and therefore vision remains a source of difficulty and apprehension. A third is damage to the brain, leading to impairment of vision, speech, relationships etc. There are many other examples.

d) Learning about the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system in the context of the theory of evolution; in particular identifying the relationships between perception or behaviour and the various areas of the brain.

This new scientific view of ourselves and the world corroborates the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, which state that the world is a concept based on name and form. 'Name' represents language, whereby we are taught to label our perceptions as objects, thus creating differentiations, including the duality of 'I' and 'not-I'. 'Form' represents our sensory perceptions, the visual ones most strongly, but metaphorically all our other sensory data. Advaita Vedanta goes further than the scientific view, into the implications of that view. Advaita Vedanta asks us to investigate ourselves, to see and understand the process whereby an incorrect view, called 'ignorance', has arisen

and what steps are necessary to remove that ignorance and to let it be replaced by true knowledge. Ignorance is part of the natural process of the development of a human being, who is conditioned by the environment and culture from the moment of birth, if not even earlier. This is a natural process of many years, leading to our acceptance of the common sense point of view of the particular culture in which we live. The astonishing thing is, that through our dream life we have an analogous experience to our waking life, showing that it is mind which creates the world, yet we persist in ignorance. In dreamless sleep, we can experience the happiness of a quiet mind, by dropping our fears and worries. This too is a help towards the same happy state, when fully awake.

Advaita Vedanta teaches us to observe ourselves, to investigate, to reflect, to meditate and so remove our ignorance, thus allowing our real and permanent nature to shine forth. It is my experience, that when meditating and the state of cessation of thought is reached, awareness without any object is experienced. This awareness is interrupted from time to time by sensations, images, verbal thoughts, but all these are sequential and are experienced as of the same nature as the uninterrupted awareness. The ego or I-thought is also seen as a form of awareness. It is best to meditate initially with the eyes shut, because the sense of sight is so utterly overwhelming, but at a later stage it is possible to open the eyes and remain in the meditative state. The profound insight from these meditations is that all our cognitive activities, even when not meditating, are of the nature of awareness or consciousness.

Meditation therefore slows down the natural process of perception and shows us that the world, including our bodies, is a concept based on our sensations and it is the sensations and associated emotions and thought, that are the elements of every so called physical and mental object. Successful meditation in the morning, helps me to cope with the problems of the day, especially if at appropriate moments, the meditative state is recalled. After studying the Mandukya Upanishad, with the commentaries of Gaudapada and Shankaracharya, I also use, as an item of reflection, the mantra

AUM. 'A' represents the waking state, 'U' the dreaming state and 'M' the dreamless state, the whole word AUM representing the Self. This reminds me of my divine nature and the impermanence of the difficulties of the waking state. Finally when it is realised that everything, even the ego, is a manifestation of the Self (Brahman, Atman), then the mantra 'I' can be used, which Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi called the greatest of all the mantras. This then becomes I - I - I - I etc., because wherever or whatever we look at, touch, listen or think etc., it is 'I'. This removes the boundary of the I-sense from our skins into all limitless dimensions. Bhagavan asked his questioners to reflect on who says that there is an independent world? The world does not say it, but the questioner does, so the questioner is the source of the world concept, which is what cognitive science has now also confirmed.¹ ▲

¹ Within the limits of this article, the detailed bases of these conclusions cannot be described, but for the interested reader, a good book giving much of this information is by Professor Donald D. Hoffman of the University of California, Irvine. The book is titled *Visual Intelligence: How We Create What We See*, 1998, W. W. Norton & Co. New York and London.

Sri Ramana Jnana Ratha Yatra July 17-Sept 1, 2004

The Ratha Yatra will begin at Tiruchuli July 17th and for 45 days cover more than 100 localities in South India. The Ratham is scheduled to reach Tiruvannamalai on August 30th and conclude after going around sacred Arunachala for three consecutive days. Devotees are invited to participate by reciting *Aksharamanamalai* and thereby receive the bountiful blessings of Arunachala Ramana!

Please note the following changes in the Yatra itinerary: July 18th, Tirunelveli; 19th: Tuticorin.; 21st: Nagarkoil; August 8th: Chidambaram; 9th: Neyveli; 15th: Tirupati; 16th: Srikalahasti. For further info refer to last issue of the Mountain Path or the website: <http://www.geocities.com/cyberratham>

Sri Lakanath Raja--04563-231258

Sri Chandramouli--94432-37200

Sri Sivadas Krishnan--94432-37200

Dialogues on Lakshmi the Cow

Adapted from the Tamil
Prani Mitra Bhagavan Ramanar

EDITED BY MICHAEL HIGHBURGER

The following excerpt is from the recently published dramatization of Lakshmi's life based on Prof. V. Niranjan's and M.G. Balu's rendering of the Tamil Prani Mitra. As the dialogues here are often imaginary or did not occur in the context depicted, they are not meant to serve in any historical or scholarly capacity. Rather, in the service of storytelling, the ensuing accounts are intended simply for readers' enjoyment and inspiration, as well as honouring the life of this great devotee. The present scenes come from Chapter 6 dealing with celebrations and special moments at the Ashram...

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

WHILE Goddess Lakshmi is believed to have emerged from an Ocean of Milk, it is said that Brahma took the form of a cow in order to renew and fortify humans with his nectar as milk from the

Formerly of the American Camaldoli Benedictines, Michael Highburger took up residence four years ago in Sri Ramanashram where he currently lives and serves.

cow's udder. Thus, the cow is not only the giver and renewer of life, Mother Eternal, but also verily God incarnate.

These hallowed beliefs express themselves in a number of ways, not least of all in the association of Friday—the day of Holy Mother—with veneration of the cow. At Ramanashram this is beautifully evinced in the special attention Lakshmi receives on Fridays when she is bedecked with garlands of jasmine and tulsi. This day each week she would come for Bhagavan's darshan in full regalia and Bhagavan would invariably note that Friday had arrived!

Similarly the annual celebration of Mattu Pongal is the harvest festival dedicated to cows. On this day, special puja is performed to Nandi as well as cows, oxen, buffaloes and horses, all of which are fed boiled sweet rice (called pongal) and praised in liturgy and song. In the evening, festoons of aloe fiber and cloth with coins are attached to the horns of cows and oxen as they are jubilantly paraded through the town.

As is customary on Mattu Pongal day at the Ashram, for the one mid-January of 1946 Lakshmi is handsomely decorated in the goshala. Around her neck are garlands of holy basil, tuberose, and hibiscus, as well as wreathes of edibles—sugarcane, coconut kernels and murukku. The goshala gets a remake and is the center of worship this day...

DEVOTEE: Look how beautiful Lakshmi is! Her delicate horns and almond-shaped eyes!

VISITOR: I wish we could have a photograph of Bhagavan and Lakshmi at this moment.

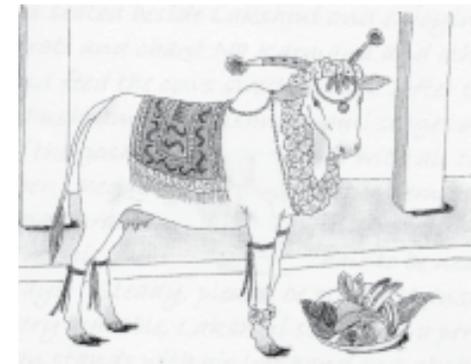
BHAGAVAN: (Overhearing) Just wait!

While Bhagavan is seated beside Lakshmi, devotees perform arati and chant "Na Karmana" and other Vedic hymns. Then all join in and feed the cows sweet pongal. After the puja, while chanting "Mantra Pushpam", Dr. Krishnaswami stages a photo. Lakshmi is led to the center of the goshala with all those assembled making way for her. Regal in her demeanour and stately in her posture, she moves gracefully, swaying her head to and fro. Bhagavan leaves his chair to be near her. Patting her back, Bhagavan says: "Steady, please, be steady!" Instantly, as though

understanding every syllable, Lakshmi stands in a perfect samadhi-like stillness. Bhagavan stands with his left hand on Lakshmi's back, holding his walking stick in the other. Photos are taken.

DEVOTEE: Seeing Bhagavan standing at the centre of the goshala amongst the cows makes me think of Gopalakrishnan, the son of Nandhagopan! In the Puranas, when Vishnu is Raghava, Goddess Lakshmi is Sita. In this divine scene Krishna is Ramana and Radha is Cow Lakshmi, am I not right?

VISITOR: It is just as you say!



LAKSHMI'S CONSOLATION

While being in Bhagavan's presence makes any occasion special, for Lakshmi and other devotees too, there are as well times not of celebration but of woe when they suffer and experience anguish of heart. On such occasions Lakshmi would come to Bhagavan for solace. One day Lakshmi enters the hall, puts her head on Bhagavan's shoulder and begins to weep. Bhagavan sits quietly, caressing her, and then with a dove-like gentleness...

BHAGAVAN: Why are you so sad, my little one? Who has hurt you?

Pauses and strokes her again.

BHAGAVAN: Cheer up my dear! Stop crying, I am your friend!

After a few minutes Lakshmi's weeping subsides and she goes away comforted.

On another occasion Lakshmi gallops into the hall distressed, her legs and tail full of mud, blood oozing from her nose and a half-severed rope hanging from her neck. She goes straight toward the sofa where Bhagavan is seated, ignoring the attendant's many protests about her sullied condition.

BHAGAVAN: Let her come. Let her come! *(To Lakshmi)* Come my dear. Please come near. *(Affectionately petting her, then noticing...)* What's this? Blood is oozing from your nose!

ATTENDANT: They've been piercing her nose to install a rope.

BHAGAVAN: Oho! That's why she came. Unable to bear the pain, she has come for consolation.

Bhagavan shows genuine sympathy for her predicament.

BHAGAVAN: *(To attendants)* Please give her some fruit or iddlies to calm her.

The attendants pacify her with some plantains and she goes on her way. All return to their seats in the hall.

BHAGAVAN: *(Addressing the attendants)* Don't you all also come to me when you have troubles? She has done the same. When we have trouble, do we consider whether our clothes are clean or our hair properly brushed?

SILENT OCCASIONS

There are also the special occasions when there is neither celebration nor crisis nor any activity whatever but an abiding silence throughout the hall and Ashram. On some occasions, after a long period without rain, there would be a flash-flood rain in the early morning hours. The whole of the surrounding nature would be awakened, brought to life again after the lingering drought. Frogs would chant in full voice, the Ashram well would fill to the brim and the sound of water from the mountain be heard in the distance. The fragrance of lemongrass, sage and pampas, unnoticeable during the dry months, would fill the darshan hall. On such mornings, an infused silence would permeate as Bhagavan, devotees, and often times, Gomatha Lakshmi, would sit in meditation, drinking in the stillness of the after-rain hush.

BHAGAVAN'S JAYANTHI DAY

The most special of all occasions is Bhagavan's Jayanthi day falling between mid-December and mid-January. This day is especially important for Lakshmi because of her 'habit' (in the early years) of calving on these days. On the Jayanthi days when this happened Lakshmi and her newborn would be invariably celebrated as well!¹

One such Jayanthi, as preparations are in progress, Bhagavan is sitting among devotees. There is a joyful ambience. Even the nearby troop of monkeys seems light-hearted as they frolic about, jumping from tree to tree. There are mothers with their young, adolescents wrestling one another and others playing with each other's tails. Peacocks are making their presence known, trumpeting and dancing, some with their blue, green, and turquoise plumage in full display. Chinnaswami is conversing with workers and devotees, directing the day's activities as Kunjuswami, Ramanatha and others move about busily. Amidst the flurry, a devotee enters the hall from the goshala and joyously announces that only some minutes before Lakshmi gave birth! Within moments Lakshmi herself gallops into the hall, moving directly toward Bhagavan...

BHAGAVAN: Lakshmi, have you come to tell me that you now have a new baby? *(Pauses to look at her)* Alright, I will come to the shed and see your little one. Ramanatha, please take some sugar candy and distribute it.

Lumps of sugar are brought from the dining hall. Taking a piece, Bhagavan ambles out with Lakshmi. On the way...

KUNJUSWAMI: *(To Bhagavan)* Lakshmi has calved on the day when we are celebrating Bhagavan's birthday. How auspicious!

BHAGAVAN: Correct yourself, Kunju! Say "Bhagavan's birthday celebrations are taking place on the day Lakshmi has calved!"

At the goshala Lakshmi leans her head against Bhagavan. Her calf is hopping about, unable yet to steadily support herself with her unaccustomed legs. She butts at her mother's udder. Monkeys nearby

¹ Of Lakshmi's nine calves, amazingly no less than three are born on Bhagavan's Jayanti day.

marvel at the goings-on. As it is Jayanthi, Dr Krishnaswami arrives as anticipated with his camera. Photos are taken of Bhagavan near Lakshmi and her newborn.

BHAGAVAN: *(To ChinnaSwami)* Pitchai! Today is going to be a feast with *payasam* and *vadai*, isn't it?

CHINNASWAMI: Of course! It's Bhagavan's birthday!

BHAGAVAN: But Lakshmi has also calved. What will be the special item for that?

CHINNASWAMI: Bhagavan, we will serve *laddu*.

BHAGAVAN: *(Indicating the young monkeys there)* Let these boys and girls have a feast today as well!

CHINNASWAMI: Oh Bhagavan, if we start serving them, it is sure to end up in a great commotion, a troublesome affair.

BHAGAVAN: They won't be troublesome. Let them share in the fun too! *(To Kunjuswami who is standing by with some bananas)* Kunju, give me some and I'll distribute them.

Kunjuswami passes some bananas to Bhagavan which he begins giving out, one to each of his "friends".

BHAGAVAN: Hey boys and girls! You shouldn't all come pressing forward at once. Behave! Come one at a time.

Monkeys and their young begin to form a queue and receive a banana from Bhagavan. Bhagavan notices one of the mother's giving her banana to her baby.

BHAGAVAN: Look there! Do you see the maternal care? Just like a good mother! *(To the monkeys)* Right! All of you move on now like good children.

The monkeys disperse one by one. ▲

Still today more than 50 years later special puja is performed at Lakshmi's samadhi each Friday morning as well as on Mattu Pongal day and the anniversary day of Lakshmi's liberation.

Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam

verse five

SADHU OM

English Paraphrase

O Arunachala, he who, with mind surrendered to You and seeing You always, without [a sense of] otherness loves everything as Your form, triumphs having drowned [lost his individuality] in You [the real Self], who are the form of bliss.

Commentary

If the mind has been surrendered to Arunachala, one loses the freedom or right to use that mind to think any thought. The mind being surrendered to God means the state in which the mind has subsided completely and merged in Self. So long as the mind has any separate existence of its own, it cannot be said to be a mind which is truly surrendered to God. Once the mind has been truly surrendered to God, it loses its separate individuality and abides as Self alone. Abiding thus as Self, the mind sees or knows nothing other than Self, which is the true nature of God or Arunachala. Hence only the mind which is thus merged in Self as Self can be said to be the mind which is truly seeing God; so long as the mind retains a separate individuality of its own, however much it may

see God (in name and form), it is not truly seeing Him. Such is the truth revealed by Sri Bhagavan in verse 8 of *Ulladu Narpadu*.

In this fifth verse of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam* Sri Bhagavan emphasizes that God or Arunachala should be seen always. What does he mean by the word “always” (*eppozhudum*)? He means not only in waking and in dream, but also in sleep; not only in all these three states, but even after death and after pralaya; not only in the present and future, but also in the past. Seeing God in all the three times — past, present and future — and in all the various states can alone be described as ‘seeing Him always’. Since the mind has a separate existence of its own only in the states of waking and dream, it can see God as a name and form only in these two states. But how can it see God in the state of sleep, in which it has subsided and temporarily lost its separate existence? Therefore, if the mind is to see God always, it must merge permanently in Self and thereby become of the nature of Self, which shines in all the three states and all the three times.

If anyone surrenders his mind to God, what remains thereafter is only Self. Therefore the words ‘seeing You always by a mind which is surrendered to You’ do not mean ‘seeing You by the mind’ but only ‘seeing You by Self’. Though Sri Bhagavan says ‘seeing You by the mind’ we should take careful note of the words he uses to qualify that mind: ‘a mind which is surrendered to You’. There is a mantra in Sanskrit ‘*jita kamaya namah*’, which means ‘Obeisance to the one who has conquered desire’. If we ignore the qualifying word *jita*, meaning ‘conquered’ or ‘subdued’, and take the mantra to mean ‘*kamaya namah*’ (obeisance to the one who has desire), we would be giving a meaning directly opposite to the real meaning of the mantra. Similarly, in this verse if we ignore the qualifying words ‘*unnidattil oppuvitta*’ (meaning ‘which is surrendered to You’), and take the clause to mean ‘*ullattal eppozhudum unnaik kandu*’ (meaning ‘seeing You always by the mind’), we would be giving a meaning directly opposite to the real meaning intended by Sri Bhagavan. The real meaning of this first clause is that we should see God always by Self, which alone remains after the mind has been entirely surrendered to God.

When the mind is surrendered to God it merges in Self, the true nature of God, and loses its separate existence as ‘mind’. In that state what was previously mistaken to be mind is realized to be nothing but Self. Since objects can be seen as other than oneself only so long as the mind seems to exist as a separate entity, when the mind loses its separate existence and shines as Self, in that state neither the world, the living beings nor God will be experienced as other than Self. Since (as revealed by Sri Bhagavan in verse 4 of *Ulladu Narpadu*) the nature of the sight cannot be other than the nature of the eye which sees — when the eye through which we see the world is not the mind but only Self — the world will be experienced not as a collection of objects other than oneself, but only as one non-dual and undivided existence-consciousness-bliss, which is Self. This alone is the state of seeing ‘everything as Your form’.

Seeing everything thus ‘as Your form’ is possible only after experiencing the real nature of Self, and it cannot be done by any imagination of the mind.

That is why in this verse Sri Bhagavan first says ‘by the mind which is surrendered to You’, and then ‘seeing You’, and only after that does He mention ‘loving without otherness everything as Your form’. Therefore only the atma-jnani, who having surrendered his mind to God shines as the form of Self, which is the real nature of God, can see everything as God.

But if one tries to see everything as God before realizing the true nature of Self by surrendering the mind to Him, all one’s efforts will be a mere act of imagination by the mind. Without knowing God as He really is, how to see everything as His form? If you want to see this pen as a tiger, by an act of imagination you may do so: this end is its head, this end is its tail, here is its mouth, there are its eyes, and so on. Because you have seen a tiger, you can imagine like this. But if you have never seen a tiger and if you have no idea what a tiger is,

Seeing everything thus
‘as Your form’
is possible only after
experiencing the real
nature of Self

you cannot even imagine this pen as a tiger. If you say, “I see this pen as a tiger: here are its wings, there are its wheels”, and so on, is it not clear that you have never seen a tiger? Equally meaningless and laughable are the claims of those people who have not realized Self but who say, “I see everything as God; I see this stone as God; I see that table as God; I see God in every object and in every person; I see God in the beggars and poor people; I love all people as myself”.

The real nature of God is Self, the pure existence-consciousness-bliss which shines devoid of names and forms and undivided by any kind of duality. Until we realize our own nature as the nameless and formless existence-consciousness-bliss, how can we see everything as that? The nature of the mind is to see only names and forms, and to see these names and forms as other than itself. Until this mind is surrendered completely, how can we see our own real nameless and formless nature? And until we see that, it is certain that we cannot see everything as that.

Here some people ask, “Has not Sri Bhagavan said in verse 5 of *Upadesa Undiyar* that to worship thinking ‘Everything is the form of God’ is good worship? Therefore should we not think everything to be God?” The word used by Sri Bhagavan in that verse is only ‘thinking’ and not ‘seeing’. What is described as a sadhana in that verse is only for sadhakas who are in the very beginning stage of the successive practices of puja, japa and dhyana, each successive one of which is superior to the previous one, and it is not applicable to the highly mature souls who have attained the supreme level of devotion which is described in this last verse of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*. Trying by the mind to see the world and all the living beings in the world (that is, all the eight forms) as forms of God is a mere act of imagination. Though cultivating such an imagination may be helpful to some extent to purify the mind of its grosser impurities in the form of selfish desires and attachments, and though the mind purified by this practice and by other successive practices in the path of *nishkamyā* karma and bhakti will eventually be enabled to understand what is the real and direct path to liberation, it cannot be said that a

person who is cultivating this imagination is actually able to see everything as God. Thinking everything to be God is an attitude of mind which is appropriate to an aspirant who is following the path of *nishkamyā* bhakti, but actually seeing everything as God is possible only in the state in which the thinking mind has been surrendered and has thereby merged in the state of non-duality in which nothing is seen as other than Self.

Only he who abides firmly
and naturally as
the non-dual Self...
is able to see
everything as Self

Only he who abides firmly and naturally as the non-dual Self, having destroyed the mind by self-surrender, is able to see everything as Self — only he is able to love everything without any sense of otherness. When it is said that he sees everything as Self, what it means is that he does not see everything as ‘everything’ but only as the one, single, non-dual Self. Hence there is no wonder in the fact that he naturally loves everything as himself, because his loving everything is nothing but his loving himself. Since self-love is natural, only he who sees everything as himself can show real love to all things and all creatures. So long as there is the feeling that something is other than oneself (even if that something is God), the love one experiences for it cannot be whole and undivided¹. Therefore the words “he who loves everything without otherness as Your form” refer only to the atma-jnani, who has attained non-dual union with Self. That is, the atma-jnani alone is one who has “the mind surrendered to You”; he alone is one who “sees You always”; he alone is one who “loves everything without otherness”. Hence in this verse Sri Bhagavan declares that only the atma-jnani has attained the victory

¹ Refer to *The Path of Sri Ramana* – Part Two, pp. 150-156, where this truth is explained in more detail.

which is the real aim of human life, having drowned in Arunachala, the form of supreme bliss.

In this verse all the three aspects of reality, sat, chit and ananda, are touched upon. How? When the mind has been surrendered to God, what remains thereafter is the state of Self-abidance, which is sat. In that state of Self-abidance, what shines is the eternal knowledge of Self; this is “seeing You always”, which is chit. By thus being and knowing Self, “love without otherness” (*annyamil anbu*) is experienced, which is the ananda aspect. Thus surrendering the mind to God, seeing Him always, and loving everything without otherness as His form are not three separate things — they are all one and the same.

Similarly in the last part of this verse, “O Arunachala, he triumphs having drowned in You, who are the form of bliss”, all the three aspects of reality are again touched upon. The word *velhum* (meaning ‘triumphs’ or ‘attains victory’) here denotes attaining firmness or steadiness — that is, attaining the firm and unshakable state of Self-abidance; this is the sat aspect. The words *unnil azhnte* (meaning ‘having drowned in You’) denote the mind drowning in the light of Self-consciousness, which (as revealed in the first verse) swallows everything by its spreading rays; when the mind thus drowns in Self, all its knowledge in the form of awareness of objects other than itself is swallowed in that brilliant light of Self-consciousness, and the mind thus remains shining as that light alone; this drowning of the mind-knowledge in the light of Self-knowledge is the chit aspect. The word *inburuvam* (meaning ‘who are the form of bliss’) denote that Arunachala, the light of Self-knowledge, is the very form of bliss, which is the ananda aspect. Therefore whoever drowns in Self by attaining the experience (chit) of the victorious state of firm Self-abidance (sat) attains the supreme bliss (ananda).

Thus we have seen that throughout these five verses what Sri Bhagavan is talking about and praising is only the shining of the light of Self-consciousness and the means to attain that light. The means He describes is on analysis reduced to two paths, namely Self-enquiry and self-surrender. When He begins to show the path, He



first clearly describes the path of Self-enquiry in verse 3: “scrutinizing with that pure mind which is facing Selfwards ‘where does this “I” rise?’” Then in the next verse He describes the same path of Self-enquiry, using the word ‘meditating’ (*dhyanittu*) instead using the word ‘scrutinizing’ (*aynde*): “having given up external objects ... meditating upon You in the heart with the mind which is still”. Meditating upon ‘I’, which alone shines when all external objects have been given up, is the same as scrutinizing ‘where does this “I” rise?’ Scrutinizing the source of ‘I’ is called Self-enquiry, whereas meditating upon ‘I’ is called Self-attention, but though the words differ, in practice they are one and the same. Finally in this fifth verse he describes the path of devotion or self-surrender, but while describing this path, He describes it in just half a line: “*unnidattil oppuvitta ullattal*” — words which literally mean ‘by the mind (or heart) surrendered in You’. That alone is true bhakti or devotion. Then in the rest of this fifth verse he describes the final state of attainment, the transcendent state of supreme devotion which shines as *prajna* or pure Self-consciousness.

Though it is true that (as narrated in the introduction to this commentary) Ganapati Sastri had asked Sri Bhagavan to compose these last three verses on the subject of the four yogas — karma, bhakti, yoga and jnana, Sri Bhagavan has in fact described in these three verses only the two paths which are acceptable to him, namely jnana and bhakti. But in concession to the desire of Ganapati Sastri, in the fourth verse he made a passing reference to pranayama as a means to make the mind still, and he used the words ‘*dhyanittu*’ (meditating) and ‘*yogi*’, thereby making it appear on superficial observation that he was describing the path of raja yoga, while in fact he was describing only meditation upon ‘I’, which is the path of jnana. However, in none of these three verses has he made any mention of the path of karma yoga. If at all it is to be said that he has touched upon the subject of karma yoga, it can only be said that in this fifth verse he has indirectly referred not to the path of karma yoga but to the goal of karma yoga. That is, just as in verse 10 of *Upadesa Undiyar* Sri Bhagavan has said that remaining

subsided in Self, the source from which one arose, is karma, bhakti, yoga and jnana, so he teaches in this verse that drowning in Self by surrendering the mind is the most perfect form of karma and bhakti.

The ideal of the karma yogi is to see, to love and to worship everything as the form of God. But so long as he tries to achieve this ideal while still retaining the mind, his seeing, loving and worshipping everything as God is a mere imagination and cannot be real. Therefore in this verse Sri Bhagavan teaches that if the karma yogi is truly to see, to love and to worship everything as God, he must first surrender his mind to God. Only after surrendering his mind can he know God as He really is, and then only can he see and love everything as God. That is why Sri Bhagavan used to say, “An atma-jnani alone is a true karma yogi”².

However, though this verse is clearly describing only the state of final attainment, which is achieved by completely surrendering the mind to God, and though the wording of this verse gives no room for it to be interpreted as describing the practice of karma yoga, there are people who have tried to twist the text by interpreting that in this verse Sri Bhagavan has recommended us to practise karma yoga by always seeing and loving everything as God. In order to establish this far-fetched interpretation, they assert that, since Sri Bhagavan has used the word *ullattal* (meaning ‘by the mind’), He has confirmed that it is possible for the mind at all times to see and to love everything as God. That is, they imagine that we should first surrender the mind to God, and then retaining that mind we should use it to see everything as His form. If asked how it would be possible to use the mind thus after it has been surrendered, they argue that it must be possible because Sri Bhagavan has said that by the mind we are to see everything as God. And if asked how the mind can see

² *Atma-jnaniye unmaiyaana karma-yogium avan* are the Tamil words spoken by Sri Bhagavan, as recorded in *Sri Maharshi Vaymozhi* p. 21, an English version of which can be found in *Maharshi’s Gospel* Ch. III, Book I, and *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 39.

God “always” (*eppozbudum*), that is, in all the three times and all the three states, they brush aside the question saying that it is not necessary to give so much importance to each and every word in the verse. Before such learned fools, we should not open our mouths. That is why it is said in *Sri Ramana Gitam*³:

“In this world which is a crowd who do not understand the Guru’s words, those who have attained Grace will not move their tongue.”

— *Guru Sol Puriyak Kuttam*, refrain.

Even if we know the truth, we should not tell it openly, because people are not ready to accept it. When so many great philosophers and learned people have to come forward to give such wrong interpretations to the works of Sri Bhagavan, it is best for us to remain quiet. Unless anyone asks us, we should not tell anything.

Nowadays there are so many people who claim, “We are karma yogis. We have surrendered ourselves to God. We are able to see God in everything, and hence we love all people. Since we see all people as God, who is the form of bliss, we are doing social service to remove their sufferings! For us work is worship, and therefore we are busy building schools and establishing hospitals. If any areas are affected by floods or by drought, we have to do relief work by taking food packets to the afflicted people. Doing such activities is truly loving all people as God. Doing such social service is the best means to attain moksha”. People who talk in this manner are not only cheating others but also cheating themselves. Not knowing what God is, they imagine that they are able to see God in everything. When they cheat themselves wantonly in this manner, a subtle egoism begins to grow in their mind making them feel that they are right in all their actions and even that they are spiritually more advanced than other people. Only when death comes will they receive the proper whiplash — then they will be made to feel, “We have been cheating ourselves all along. What will become of us now? Where are we going now?” Without being able to understand anything

³ *Sri Ramana Gitam* is a collection of Tamil songs in praise of Sri Bhagavan composed by Sri Sadhu Om.

clearly, they will end their life in a state of mental confusion. If a state of clarity is to come at the time of death, now itself they should give up cheating themselves.

If anyone truly wishes to see and to love everything as God, there is only one way — that is, the mind, whose nature is to see the one reality, which is God, as the many names and forms of this world, must be given up by means of either self-surrender or Self-enquiry. Until the mind is thus given up, however much karma yoga one may do, or whatever other kinds of wonderful efforts one may make, it is certainly impossible for one to see everything as God.

Let us now see the connection underlying all the main ideas expressed by Sri Bhagavan in these five verses: Arunachala is the real Self which is ever shining in the heart as ‘I’ (verse 2); the entire world of multiplicity is a mere picture which appears and disappears only in Self (verse 2); since this world-appearance seemingly conceals the real nature of Self, in order to know Self

Until the mind
is thus given up...
it is certainly impossible
for one to see
everything as God

as it is, we should give up attending to external objects (verse 4) and, with a pure mind which is facing Selfwards (verse 3), we should meditate upon the consciousness ‘I’ which shines in the heart (verse 4); by thus attending to ‘I’, we will clearly know its true nature (verse 3), which is the light of self-consciousness (verse 4), and thus the mind will cease to exist as a separate entity by merging in Self like a river merging in the ocean (verse 3); when the mind is thus surrendered into the ocean of Self-consciousness, which is Arunachala, it will shine as Self, whose nature is to see itself always (verse 5); when by the light of the Grace of Arunachala, which is the sun of Self-knowledge, the mind-bud which was swelling with devotion is thus made to blossom fully as the lotus of pure Self-consciousness, the entire world-appearance which was seen by that mind will be

swallowed by the brilliant light of Self-knowledge, which will then be experienced as the ocean of amrita which is the fullness of Grace (verse 1); when everything is thus swallowed by the light of Self, it will be realized that what was previously seen as ‘everything’ is in fact nothing but Self itself, and hence, since no otherness will be experienced in that state, due to its own natural self-love Self will love ‘everything’ as itself (verse 5); since misery is experienced only because the mind sees the manifold objects of this world-appearances as other than itself, when the mind drowns in Self what will remain shining is only the ocean of bliss (verse 5). Thus in these five verses, which are written in the form of a stotra in praise of Arunachala, Sri Bhagavan has extolled the greatness of the blissful light of Self-consciousness and has revealed the means by which we can experience the truth that that light is ever our own real nature.

Concluding Verse

English Paraphrase

Arunagiri-Ramana happily gave to the world through [these] pleasant Tamil *venbas* [verses in *venba* metre] the five gems to Arunachala [*Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*], which are [a revelation of] the precious import of vedanta and which He [first] composed [literally saw or discovered] in Sanskrit.

Note: As explained in the introduction to this commentary, this verse was composed by Sri Bhagavan as a concluding verse to the Tamil version of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*, and was adapted by Him from the concluding verse composed by Daivarata for the Sanskrit version. ▲

BHAGAVAN'S HERBAL REMEDIES

WE have been presenting to our readers, Sri Bhagavan's medicinal recipes that are based on the time tested herbal remedial measures. This has been widely welcomed. In response to requests from many readers we are now republishing all the recipes of the last five issues. We have also separately given the English, Tamil and Botanical names of the ingredients used in these recipes.

PITTAHARI

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

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



TWO RECIPES FOR RHEUMATISM

a) Take juice of Tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*) leaf and mix a little pepper powder and ghee (substitute butter or milk if preferred) in it. Regular intake of this liquid will cure rheumatism.

b) Take garlic and jaggery (unrefined brown-sugar) and grind them, mix with sesame-oil and make a good paste of these. Regular intake of this paste will cure rheumatism.

SARASWATHA CHURNAM

Ingredients: dry ginger, liquorice, rock salt, the long pippali, cumin seeds, turmeric, barberry, calamus root, saussurea, omum — all these in equal measure.

Grind the ingredients well into fine powder and mix together. Take a teaspoon of ghee (clarified butter) and half teaspoon of the powdered mixture and mix thoroughly. Consume twice a day. The alternative for ghee is milk. Soothes nerves, calms an agitated brain, acts on tissues and restores vitality. Symptoms for which this should be used: Loss of memory, sluggish brain, insomnia, weak muscles and tissues.



ASHTA CHURNAM

Ingredients required:

Black pepper	—	9 parts
Dry ginger	—	7 parts
The bigger cumin seed	—	5 parts
Rock salt	—	5 parts
Long pippali	—	5 parts
Cumin seed	—	3 parts
Asafoetida (ingu)	—	2 parts
Omum	—	2 parts

Clean all the above ingredients well and grind them into fine powder. Rice should be well cooked and mixed with ghee (or buttermilk). Take a spoonful of the powder and mix it well with the rice and consume. This cures indigestion, poor appetite, stomach-ache and is also good for rheumatism.

ASWAGANDHI CHURNAM

Ingredients required:

Clove	—	10 grammes
Sirunagappu	—	20 grammes
Cardamom	—	40 grammes
Black pepper	—	80 grammes
Rice pippali	—	160 grammes
Dry ginger	—	320 grammes
Withania	—	640 grammes
Sugar candy	—	1280 grammes

Clean the ingredients well, powder them and mix well. This is a medicine for general vitality, strength and vigour. It is also reputed to cure many diseases, even complicated ones.



VAISWANARA CHURNAM

Rock salt	—	1 part
Wild celery/smallage	—	2 parts
Cummin seed	—	3 parts
Long pepper	—	4 parts
Dry ginger	—	5 parts
Outer shell of Myrobalan fruit	—	6 parts

Convert these above into fine powder, and mix them well. Take between 1 to 3 grams of this powder, mix it with either water or buttermilk and consume thrice daily. This cures stomach problems such as a dull stomach-ache and burning sensation in the stomach.

English Name	Botanical Name	Tamil Name
Barberry Calamus root	<i>berberis spp</i>	maramanjai
Black pepper	<i>piper nigrum</i>	kurumilagu
Cardamom	<i>elettaria cardamom</i>	elakkai
Clove	<i>sygium aromaticum</i>	lavangam
Cumin seeds	<i>cumin cyminum</i>	sheeragam
Cummin powder	<i>cumin cyminum</i>	sheeraga thool
Dry ginger	<i>dry zingiberis officinals</i>	shukku
Garlic	<i>allium satvium</i>	poondu
Ghee	<i>ghee</i>	nei
Ginger	<i>zingiberis officinals</i>	inji
Jaggery	<i>jaggery</i>	vellam
Liquorice	<i>glycyzrrhiza spp</i>	atimaduram
Long pippali	<i>cube officinalis</i>	valmilagu
Omum	<i>Hysoyosmus</i>	omum
Rice pippali	<i>Piper Longum</i>	arisi tippili
Rock salt	<i>Rock salt</i>	kal uppu
Saussurea	<i>Saussurea Iappa</i>	koshttam
Sirunagappu	<i>messua ferrea</i>	sirunagappu
Sugar	Saccharine sugar	sarkkarai
Sugar candy	Sugar candy	kalkandu
Bigger cummin seed	<i>carum carui</i>	shombu
Tulasi leaf (the Basil leaf)	<i>ocimum SPP</i>	tulasi
Turmeric	<i>curcuma longa</i>	manjal
Withania	<i>withania somnifera</i>	asvagandha



Encomium to Dr K. Subrahmanian

S. RAM MOHAN

IN his drama Julius Caesar, Shakespeare in the words of Mark Antony, pays a beautiful tribute to Julius Caesar.

“His life was gentle./The elements so mixed in him./
That nature itself stands up and tell to all the world./
This was a man!”

This quote is a very fit description of Dr.K.S. as we affectionately called him.

Dr.K.S. was a multi-faceted personality. He was a great teacher, who was an effective source for transforming scores of young minds throughout the country. He was a noted columnist whose opinions impacted and reverberated in several quarters and as well, was an acknowledged linguist whose opinions were readily sought after by great scholars. Dr. K.S. was a great orator whose words had an electrifying effect on the audience. He was a friend, philosopher and guide to all the people who came to him in matters, temporal and spiritual and as a result was venerated as a competent spiritual guide to the earnest seekers. He instilled a great deep faith in Divinity in all those who came to him. Above all he was a compassionate humanist, radiating empathy with all and deeply interested in the welfare of all.

The significant aspect of Dr.K.S. was his utter simplicity and genuine humility. He would often quote the words of Sri Sankara's Shatpadi Stotra.

*Avinayam Apanaya Vishnroh / Damanaya Vishaya Mriga Trishnaam
Bhooth Dayam Vistaaraya / Taaraya Samsaara Saagaratam*

“Oh Lord! Remove the lack of humility in me. Let not the mirage of worldly objects swallow me. May my mind be filled with compassion towards the entire creation. Make me cross the ocean of samsara”.

Everybody was comfortable in his presence and he did not inspire awe or trepidation in anybody. He was an ideal teacher who imparted knowledge with an outstanding quality of expression; he presented Truth with simple elegance, clothing expositions in words of quality and logic; he scrupulously adhered to the focus on God and never swerved away from the topic. His lectures had the ring of Truth in them. An ideal mentor, he was accessible to all and was quite unmindful of his own inconvenience. Right up to the last period of his existence when he became ill, he was instrumental in giving spiritual guidance and solace.

Dr.K.S.'s surrender to Sri Bhagavan was total. He came into contact with Sri Bhagavan as a baby. He has told us several times that Bhagavan had seen him before he saw him. He lived thoroughly a Bhagavan-centered life, thinking about him, talking about him and meditating on him verily like the Nayanmars and Alwars of the previous era.

Dr.K.S. once said that while many of the great cities of the world flaunt their splendour, London hides its charm. One has to seek and probe to understand and appreciate its beauty. He was like the City of London and even people who had association with him for a long time were not aware of all his versatile dimensions. He disliked any special attention paid to him.

The lure of the world never fascinated him. It is not known to many people that he even refused to apply for the post of Professor in CIEFL.* Then Director of the Institute Sri Ramesh Mohan had

* Central Institute of English & Foreign Languages.

requested the revered Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar to persuade Dr.K.S. to append his signature in the application form so that rest of the formalities could be taken care of by the Institute.

His own life reflected many aspects of Bhagavan's life. He was the quintessential successful sadhaka portrayed by Sri Bhagavan in the 5th verse of *Arunachala Panchakam*. He surrendered his mind totally to Him.

He was able to see himself in others and others in himself. His concern for others and their well-being, compassion towards all, his ability to see good in every being was legendary. He had the extraordinary ability to accept people as they are without any qualifications or stipulations, which cut across the barriers of caste, language, social strata and religions. His lectures in the Ramana Kendram and various sat sanghs in Hyderabad helped many to evolve on the spiritual path. Once when Mahatma Gandhi was asked what his message to the people was, he simply replied, “My life is my message”. Likewise Dr.K.S.'s entire life was a message of love, compassion, humility and simplicity. No written word can adequately express the enormous patience he displayed when clearing the doubts of the devotees. Those who went to him for solace found comfort.

Dr.K.S. would reiterate that he was like any other devotee of the Kendram and that the only important person and head of Ramana Kendram was Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. He used to preface his talks with the statement that people in Sri Ramana Kendram speak only because they are asked to speak and not because they know more than others. He continuously guided all the devotees to place their burden on Bhagavan, leave everything to Him and accept things as they are. He repeated the words of Sri Bhagavan that “when you travel in train will you keep luggage on your head?” Likewise when God carries us through out our life leave all the burden of your life to Him.

The eloquence of the Sri Bhagavan's silence had a special place in his speeches. He wanted the devotees to understand the importance of silence. Dr.K.S. represented the great silence within. He used to say that silence of Sri Bhagavan was not merely the silence of the tongue. It was silence of the mind. This silence has the power to

reveal the truth whereas the words only indicate lies and even when we outwardly are silent there is the incessant chatter in our mind. The story goes that King Ajatashatru set out to pay a visit to the Buddha and his more than 1,000 bhikshus, who resided outside of Rajagriha in the big mango grove. The king approached the grove with his forces and after proceeding for some distance, he found that he could hear no sound. Panic seized him. Turning to his guide he asked, "Surely some ambush has been made for me here and you are leading me into it. Neither a sound have I heard nor a clearing of the throat from that large sangha which dwells here as you said."

Such is the power of silence, which makes the uninitiated scared as if he confronts something weird. Dr.K.S. would say, "Speech is ego's customary manner of self affirmation. Long talks are ego's violent expressions." He used to cite Sri Sankara's word '*Sabda Jaalam Maharanyam Chitta Bramana Kaaranam*'. The tricky forest of words confused the mind of anybody who enters there.

His instructional post-cards were legendary among devotees. Dr.K.S. knowing the power of Sri Bhagavan's words would painstakingly write a few words on a post card frequently and send these cards to all the devotees. He always carried with him an address book containing the addresses of all the devotees including those who had to go out of the state for various reasons. These posts cards were like messages from Bhagavan himself. They have a moving quality about them and more often than not they alleviated the problems facing the devotees at that point in time. He also often sent the prasadam from Ramanashramam to the devotees. Dr.K.S. had repeatedly said that there really are no problems; whatever happens will happen according to His divine will. Sri Bhagavan will see to it that we are given the right frame of mind that will enable us to accept good and bad alike. Dr.K.S. lived the above philosophy in his life absolutely. He had no need for rituals and had given instructions to his family that after his death there was no need to perform customary rituals. He directed that the devotees and poor could be fed on those days.

Sri Bhagavan, pinnacle of Advaita Vedanta, was also the Himalayas of compassion. His compassion was such that he was deeply moved

when the devotees came to him with grief. He empathised with them and shared their sadness with tears. Sri Bhagavan cried when one day a devotee ran in distress to Bhagavan with tears and said that her adopted daughter died on that day. His compassion reached out to all animals. Even a bird's egg, which had cracked in a fall, he looked after and nurtured till a small bird emerged from the shell. Similarly Dr.K.S. showed his compassion to all without any fanfare. Many an aspiring student and research scholar found help in him. With his encouragement the members of Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad would visit the orphanages and the homes for physically handicapped to help and comfort them.

Whatever the quality of Sri Bhagavan that can be emulated by his devotees it was Dr. K.S. who adopted and lived it. He was accessible through out the day. Often when Bhagavan finished pradakshina with one devotee and returned to his place, another devotee would request Sri Bhagavan for another pradakshinam with him. Sri Bhagavan readily agreed, despite his physical problems.

Whenever the quality of renunciation was mentioned Dr.K.S. with choking voice told us about Bhagavan's total surrender to Arunachala. He would repeat several times the Venkataraman's journey to Arunachala: the boy did not even take an extra anna when the decision was made to travel to that unknown place; the dhoti that was torn to make a single kaupeenam; and that there was no thought to keep the torn portion so it could be used as a towel. The boy who placed his life totally in the hands of Arunachala and sat in absolute Bliss, not even seeking food to sustain himself. Dr.K.S. would movingly tell us this about the absolute surrender of the Master.

Like Sri Bhagavan, Dr.K.S. had a great concern for people and reached out with kindness. In the year 1978, when he went to Honolulu to attend the conference, one of the delegates asked him to visit her country, Taiwan. He complied with the request and went there and stayed in the house of the delegate. The delegate's daughter was a small, pretty child. When they became friends, she showed Dr.K.S. her pet — tiny bird in a beautiful cage. After admiring the bird, he asked the child as to how she would enjoy life in a cage. The

girl was silent for a while and then quietly went out. She returned a little later and reported that she had released the bird. Later he commented that he had probably been sent to Taipei to free a bird.

His weekly columns 'Between You and Me' and 'Know Your English' published in *The Hindu* were widely read in India and abroad and eventually the Oxford University Press published them in two volumes. In his columns, he did not even spare anybody, however high and mighty they were. Surprisingly nobody took offence or held him in fear and they would even write letters of appeal explaining their view.

He was a noted Vedanti but also a great devotee. He went into raptures while explaining the various shades of meaning conveyed by each word in *Aksharamanamalai*. He used to say that grace is the theme around which this beautiful garland is strung. He encouraged the recitation of *Aksharamanamalai* by the devotees whenever possible in Ramana Kendra, Hyderabad.

His sense of humor is also renowned. He knew how to laugh at himself. Being short in structure, he used to say, "I will make my speech as short as I am".

There is a famous Greek lyric which starts with the sentence, "They told me Heraclatus that thou are dead" and was often quoted by Professor K.Swaminathan. A great personality like Dr.K.S. never dies. A great karma yogi like him always lives in the minds of those to whom he was a mentor. He had launched many of us in the supreme quest. He had brought to us not only the facets of philosophy but also deep insight into them. Many who came to him have been enriched and purified and elevated by his guidance and his very presence.

Like the song of a solitary reaper, we hear your music in our soul when in the world, it is heard no more. ▲

Dr K.Subrahmanian

A friend like no other

I. S. MADUGULA

IF a man is known by the company he keeps, I should be the world's best-known person. I basked in the company of a great man, a triune individual who was a philosopher and a trusted guide besides being the best of friends. Dr. K. Subrahmanian was the best. Period.

Were it not for the fortitude I learnt from him, I should be writing this in tears, not ink. Such was our friendship. Such is my loss. What follows is not a comprehensive memoir of his life. It is a concise account of an indelible chapter in my life.

We met for the first time around mid-1969. Dr. Subrahmanian — KS to his friends — returned to the Central Institute of English & Foreign Languages in Hyderabad, from Indiana University with a Ph.D., and I went from Case Western Reserve for the first of my two stints there. I went to his office and introduced myself. It was a magical moment that lasted for the next almost thirty years. Neither my regard for him nor his affection for me abated one bit in all that time.

KS was a very simple man, child-like, smiling, sincere, outgoing, selfless. The incense in his office was a token of the fragrance of his inner self. He wore a pair of neatly pressed light-colored slacks and a white sports shirt. And eyeglasses, thick ones. He looked you straight in the eye as he spoke gently, and listened attentively when spoken to. He was polite to everyone, long-time friends as well as first-time visitors. There never was anything phony or flamboyant about him.

We quickly discovered each other's interest in Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Having found out that, as a child, he used to accompany his father to visit him, I used to ply him with questions. I was thrilled to see someone who actually saw Bhagavan in person. He said he had noticed Bhagavan's head shaking except during *parayana*, when he would sit bolt upright and motionless. I learnt other little details as well: Bhagavan was so courteous that on the mountain trails he would step aside to let someone else pass. He would shine his flashlight on his stomach and not on the floor when he had to go out at night so that the other sleepers would not be disturbed.

Within a few days of our budding acquaintance, I wondered out loud in one of our chats why we could not start a Ramana Center in Hyderabad, since almost certainly there would be enough devotees who would be interested in the project. I am not sure how exactly we put the word out—actually, he did all of that himself, using his vast network of friends and relatives—but we had a good dozen serious individuals at our first meeting. Over the years, the Hyderabad Ramana Kendra grew dramatically, and the meetings had to be moved across the street to the women's school which had larger accommodations. He established the routine for the prayer meetings, which began with a repetition of *Arunachala Siva*, followed by the chanting of *Upadesa Saram*. Then he would address the group and discuss an aspect of Bhagavan's life and teaching. Sometimes, he would suggest a period of silence and meditation, for that was how Bhagavan taught. He was there almost every Sunday for three decades and, I believe, he used to have an additional *satsang* at his house one weekday evening during the 90s.

Early on in the progress of the Kendra, there was talk about acquiring land and constructing its own permanent building. Helping this process in innumerable ways, he always assured the jittery congregation that funds would come of their own accord in time. And come they did and today his spiritual presence there is symbolized by his picture next to that of Bhagavan.

KS and I were inseparable during 1969-72 and 1979-82 when I was at the Institute. We ate lunch together. We would walk over to the neighboring Osmania University gardens to practice music—another common interest we had. He was much better at it than I was. Those days I never had to worry about running low on funds, thanks to his willingness to come to my rescue.

KS was a funny man. He had a joke for every occasion, making light of the grimmest situations. Who says a philosopher has to be boring? At one annual get-together at the Institute, he went up on stage and began singing “Twinkle, twinkle, little star” in a carnatic raga, bringing the house down. I did a self-obituary, which had been fashionable in the days gone by. He was also fiercely independent and anti-bureaucracy. If he did not like what was going on in administration, he was prepared to quit right then and there. He showed me an actual letter of resignation with a blank date that he always carried in his pocket.

His helpful nature was proverbial. At all times of the day and evening, people would call on him from all walks of life from priests to peons. And he never disappointed anyone. The fund of goodwill and gratitude he left behind is immense. He gave me a letter of introduction to the late Sri B.V. Narasimha Swamy when I first visited Ramanasramam, which made my trip so very pleasant and fruitful. He liked my book on Sankara, so he asked a local scholar to translate it into Telugu helping him secure the funding for its publication. When I was returning to the U.S. in 1982, he brought a temple priest to the Secunderabad Railway Station to bless me, complete with garlands, *arati*, and Vedic chant!

He wrote beautifully, which is a testimony to his beautiful mind. We used to discuss writing, both formal and journalistic. He started

his career as a correspondent for *The Hindu*, I believe. Later in life he still had a number of contacts at the press. He would suggest that somebody contact me for a column, when he was busy or when he thought that a particular job was right up my alley. He would ask me what an appropriate title would be for a series that he wrote, e.g. “Between You and Me.”

Not that he couldn't think of it himself, but he chose to give me the privilege. His writing was short and pithy. He did not like ostentation either in life or literature. He wrote a children's book which was very well received. He guest-wrote editorials for *The Mountain Path*. Everything he wrote was characterized by simplicity, brevity, and directness.

We kept in touch all along even though I left the country. I would visit and spend some time with him every time I was in Hyderabad. When I saw him a year before he passed on, he seemed frail, with a severely impaired vision. When I called him for the last time from Chicago with my usual light-hearted banter, he sounded very tired and said he was waiting for his son to return home from the U.S. He was not his usual self. I knew right then that something was very wrong with my friend.

Not much later, a relative of mine who returned from India gave me the bad news. It was all over for our beloved KS—and all of us whom he left behind. He was not quite three score and ten¹. The diabetes, which had for long insidiously gnawed at his system, finally shut it down. Medicine was powerless in the face of destiny, and the specialists at Chennai Netralaya ran out of options. I understand that he firmly declined the administration of oxygen, which might have given him a little more time with his family, as if he did not wish to delay his reunion with Bhagavan in whom he always abided. For one last time, he wanted to let things take their own course, as he turned-in his resignation.

Now, when I go to Hyderabad, KS will not meet me any more. The past tense is so inexorably final. ▲

¹ 28.4.1928 — 11.1.1998.

Silent Language

DR. K. SUBRAHMANYAN

SPEECH springs from silence and sinks back into silence. We all think that we have control over language but in fact language seems to have control over us. We are not sure of what we are likely to say till we have actually said it. Sometimes we are most surprised at what we have said.

Words are symbols and are not things. However beautifully they may describe truth, they are not the truth. One has to go beyond words to understand truth. Meister Eckhart says: “The man who stops with the enjoyment of a symbol never comes to the inward truth”. Words are fingers that point to truth and not truth itself. Language implies a knower and a known, a subject and an object. To realise the state where the subject and the object become one, one has to go beyond words.

Silence is not the negation of sound and is not subordinate to speech. The English word ‘silence’ has negative connotations. It is considered the opposite of ‘sound’. ‘*Mouna*’ in Sanskrit is a positive

Reprinted from *The Mountain Path*. Editorial, October 1986.

concept. The word *Mouna* is derived from *Muni*, just as *soukhya* (well-being) is derived from *sukha* (happiness). It is the characteristic of a *muni* or a sage. It is not physical silence that is referred to but mental silence. A *muni* is one whose mind is merged in the Self. The speech of a *muni* is a refraction of his silence. His is not an individual point of view as he speaks from the source of everything, the Self. As he speaks without any sense of doership, what is said by him has neither antecedents nor consequences for him.

In his *The Prose of the World*, Moreleau Ponty says: “We should consider speech before it has been pronounced against the ground of silence which precedes it, which never ceases to accompany it, and without which it would say nothing. Moreover, we should be sensitive to the thread of silence from which the tissue of speech is woven.” The more sensitive we are to the thread of silence, the more alert we shall be to what we would say. But when we are totally bound by the thread of silence, we shall have no desire to say anything. Speech is an advocate of desire. Where there is no desire, there is only silence.

When we are introduced to someone, we ask and answer several questions. When we get to know the person a little more, we do not talk that much. When we know him very well, he won't mistake us if we are occasionally silent in his company. A little gesture, a little smile will do. Silence becomes companionable where there is understanding. Greater the understanding, less the need of speech. Where there is perfect understanding, speech is not essential. Silence will do. Communication takes place without the medium of language. Speech distances man from himself. It is silence that brings him to himself. In speech there is 'otherness', in Silence there is oneness. Of speech and silence, Sri Bhagavan says: “Language is only a medium for communicating one's thoughts to another. It is called in only after thoughts arise. Other thoughts arise after the 'I'- thought arises and so the 'I'-thought is the root of all conversation. When one remains without thinking one understands another by means of the universal language of silence.”

“Silence is ever-speaking. It is a perennial flow of language which is interrupted by speaking. These words I am speaking obstruct that



Dr K. Subrahmanian
(28.4.1928 — 11.1.1998)

mute language. For example, there is electricity flowing in a wire. With resistance to its passage, it glows as a lamp or revolves as a fan. In the wire it remains as electric energy. Similarly also, silence is the eternal flow of language, obstructed by words.”

“What one fails to know by conversation extending to several years can be known instantly in silence, or in front of silence.... Dakshinamurti and his four disciples are a good example of this. This is the highest and most effective language.”

Silence is not inaction, not mere emptiness. It is the basis of everything in the world. However beautiful a house may be, if it does not have doors, windows and rooms, we can not live in it. Doors, windows and rooms are empty space. It is this empty space that makes the house liveable. However big or beautiful a car may be, it cannot move unless the small spark plugs in it function properly. The important thing in a spark plug is the gap, the empty space. For the spark to be produced in the spark plug, the empty space in it should be clean, free from the matter. The spark does not occur when there is no gap to traverse. So the car cannot run when the gap is blocked. The spark gap is thus the basis of the car’s movement. In the same way, silence is not just the negation of sound. It is the basis of everything in the universe.

Silence, according to Sri Bhagavan, is inner silence. “The inner silence is self-surrender. And that means living without the sense of the ego.” Silence comes into being when the individual is completely free from ego, when he surrenders himself totally to the Lord; he enjoys freedom where he becomes the captive of the Lord; he becomes a conqueror when he throws away the sword of his will.

The highest form of Grace, Sri Bhagavan says, is silence and it is also the highest *upadesa*. Speech is co-existent with the body. Silence is eternal. Though Sri Bhagavan is not physically alive now, his Silence is omnipotent and omnipresent. But the *Mouna*, embodied once as the *Muni*, continues resplendent. The Silence that is Bhagavan Ramana is felt and heard by the earnest seeker. The *Muni* resides as a deathless presence. ▲

ADVAITA PRIMER

Sacchidananda

T.S.VISVANATHA SHARMA

THE Vedantic texts guide the seeker through the geography of the mind. There is a sense of absolute certainty in the texts which is a comfort to the confused. Doubts are raised and then deftly disposed of by affirmative statements. The texts, in the course of affirming certain truths, raise fundamental questions which every seeker asks: what is life, who am I, what am I in the scheme of events... ? This is always an intensely personal search. Most Advaitic texts presume the enquirer has already fulfilled their duties or responsibilities. But what of the modern seeker who is not even sure of his or her own position and worth in society? In this day and age, values are changing so fast one wonders what is absolute and reliable. Where is the North Star that can unfailingly guide us?

What the traditional texts do is to raise one’s awareness by affirming that there is a greater world of thought available to us which can offer, at the very least, a taste of a finer, higher existence free from the pressures and demands of today’s world. These texts encourage one to ask questions. The responsibility is shifted immediately onto our own shoulders. This is the first step towards removing the darkness and doubt which dim our lives, and we are

assured by Bhagavan that for each step we take, the guru helps by taking the next nine.

The analogy about the maturity of the seeker illustrates that there is one who is dull like damp firewood, there is another whose wood is crisp and then there is the one who is akin to gunpowder. In an instant the latter is awakened by a word of truth. They are rare and for the majority of us it is a slow long haul towards awakening. In a manner similar to Bhagavan, who begins by focusing us on the question ‘Who am I?’, the Vedantic texts sometimes postulate the affirmation born of the experiential knowledge of the rishis, “That Thou Art.” Traditional teachings encourage continuous meditation with one-pointedness on this identity statement till the mind gives up the illusion of individuality. ‘I’ the meditator (ahamkara) dissolves or merges in the Self or Totality which alones shines unaltered. Alternatively as in Bhagavan’s method, they encourage the seeker to enquire who they are.

This so called Self is not an object. Being a case of one’s own experience (in the language of the Absolute it is actually a non-experience where all experiences cease), it is beyond all description, “Whence the speech returns along with the mind”, and beyond all concepts. Bhagavan did not try to give any concept of the Self because that would limit it. Vedanta concedes that it is beyond description but indirectly gives us an insight into the nature of the Brahman, the Supreme Being. The Tattiriya Upanishad indirectly defines Brahman as “*Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma*” which also termed Sacchidananda.¹

Everything in the world exists from some point of view. An individual can at no time proclaim that “I” do not exist for one has to posit a doubter to do the doubting. So, that essence of existence indicates that Brahman is not achit (different from, non-sentinent or inert). Similarly the word ananda or bliss is meant to connote

¹ As per rules of compounding several words into one, ta + cha when they join [*sandhi*] it becomes cch [t disappears] and chit + Ananda becomes chidananda.

that Brahman is different from unhappiness or sorrow. It is beyond bliss and non-bliss.²

Bhagavan in *Nan Yar?* offers us a key, a crucial lifeline, so we too may see clearly and be at one. He declares happiness is your first and imminent right, and is a prerequisite just as much as breathing or thinking. He further says happiness is one and the same as your existence. To be conscious of your pure existence is joy. The Vedantic terminology is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. *Sat* means that which can never be negated, in other words, the Supreme Reality (Brahman) or Truth. It exists in its own right and needs for nothing separate from itself to validate its existence. *Chit* is defined as consciousness and Vedanta says that consciousness in its pristine nature can never experience its own non-existence. Consciousness too can never be denied. It is eternal (*ananta*).

We may ask why eternal? It is eternal because it cannot be limited by any modifications. If we think about our lives, we consider it in terms of time and space. We were born in a particular time and space. Our consciousness is seemingly modified by the events that occurred and yet we know in our heart of hearts we are the same throughout it all. This ‘I’ we call our ‘I’ am, is the same ‘I’ as when we were a child and as we are now. It is a subtle thread we cannot grasp. This ‘I’ of which we are conscious is of the nature of pure consciousness. It is unaffected by time and space. It is self-manifest and is independent of any external object for its validation or existence.³

The third aspect of this triad is *ananda*, bliss. The reality of this consciousness is bliss. It is a bold declaration. It is unequivocal in declaring your true nature is *ananda*; it is happiness, joy, and bliss. *Ananda* also indicates the unlimited (long *a*: complete affirmation, yes; *nanda*: *happiness*). Whenever we feel the expansiveness of our

² Bhagavan has said: “Because we are in the phenomenal world we speak of the Self as sacchidananda.” See also Talk 433.

³ “In the three states of consciousness whatever appears as the object of enjoyment or the enjoyer or the enjoyment, I am different from them, the witness, pure consciousness, the eternal Siva (*saksi*)”. Kaivalya Upanisad 1.18

being, whenever we feel radiant because we are not bound by the gravity of thought, we are in bliss. These moments in our quotidian life are rare but they are unequivocal and never forgotten.⁴ ▲

⁴ Chandogya Up. VII.23.I “The infinite is happiness. There is no happiness in anything small (finite). Only the infinite is happiness. But one must desire to understand the infinite.” The underlying message is that the finite produces craving, *trsna*, which is the seed of sorrow. S. Radhakrishnan The Principal Upanisads p. 486.

Due to excessive processing fees in India on foreign cheques and bank drafts, we have assigned agents throughout the world to collect payments for new Mountain Path subscriptions, renewals and life subscriptions.

In England, Mr. Alasdair Black has kindly set up a bank account into which British residents can send money for the subscription.

Title: The Mountain Path Account No: 21888323

At the HSBC bank at: Holborn Circus Branch, 31 Holborn, London EC1N2HR Bank sort code: 40 - 03 - 28.

Please inform Alasdair when the amount has been credited. His email address is : aldia@waitrose.com

In the United States, payments can be made by personal cheque or money order, payable to “Arunachala Ashrama”.

Also on the Internet with a Charge Card at www.paypal.com. The account name is “Arunachala Ashrama” and the email address is: <mailto:Ashrama@arunachala.org>

From Canada payment can be made in U.S. dollars by checks and bank drafts (**cheques must be drawn on a U.S. bank**) payable to “Arunachala Ashrama”, and by Charge Card on the Internet at www.paypal.com (see above).

Native Resident Indians in the USA can open Rupee accounts with Citi Bank here in NYC. There is no charge for bank transfers and Demand Drafts delivered to the Ashrama.

Once the money has been credited to the Account we request the subscriber to inform the New York centre either by email or letter that the money has been credited to the Account. We will send the Mountain Path accordingly.

In Europe, we have yet to finalise a European subscription centre. If anyone can assist us in this regard could they please contact us.

BOOK EXCERPT

Vijnana Bhairava

The Practice of Centring Awareness

COMMENTARY BY SWAMI LAKSHMAN JOO

Introduction by Bettina Baumer

THE Vijnana Bhairava, one of the basic Agamas containing the spiritual practice of the non-dualistic Saivism of Kashmir, is an extraordinary text. The title has been explained as ‘the (mystic) knowledge of the Ultimate Reality (named Bhairava in this tradition)’. *Vijnana* implies here experiential knowledge, pure consciousness, awareness, rather than analytical knowledge. It refers to the aim of the text, i.e. to lead to a state, of entering Divine Consciousness.

Bhairava is the name given to the Absolute Reality in this tradition, and it does not have the mythological and popular connotations found in other parts of India. The text itself gives a mystical etymology of the word *Bhairava*:

“Bhairava is one who with fear (*bhaya*) makes everything resound (*ravayati*), and who pervades the entire universe. He who utters this word ‘Bhairava’ unceasingly becomes Shiva.”

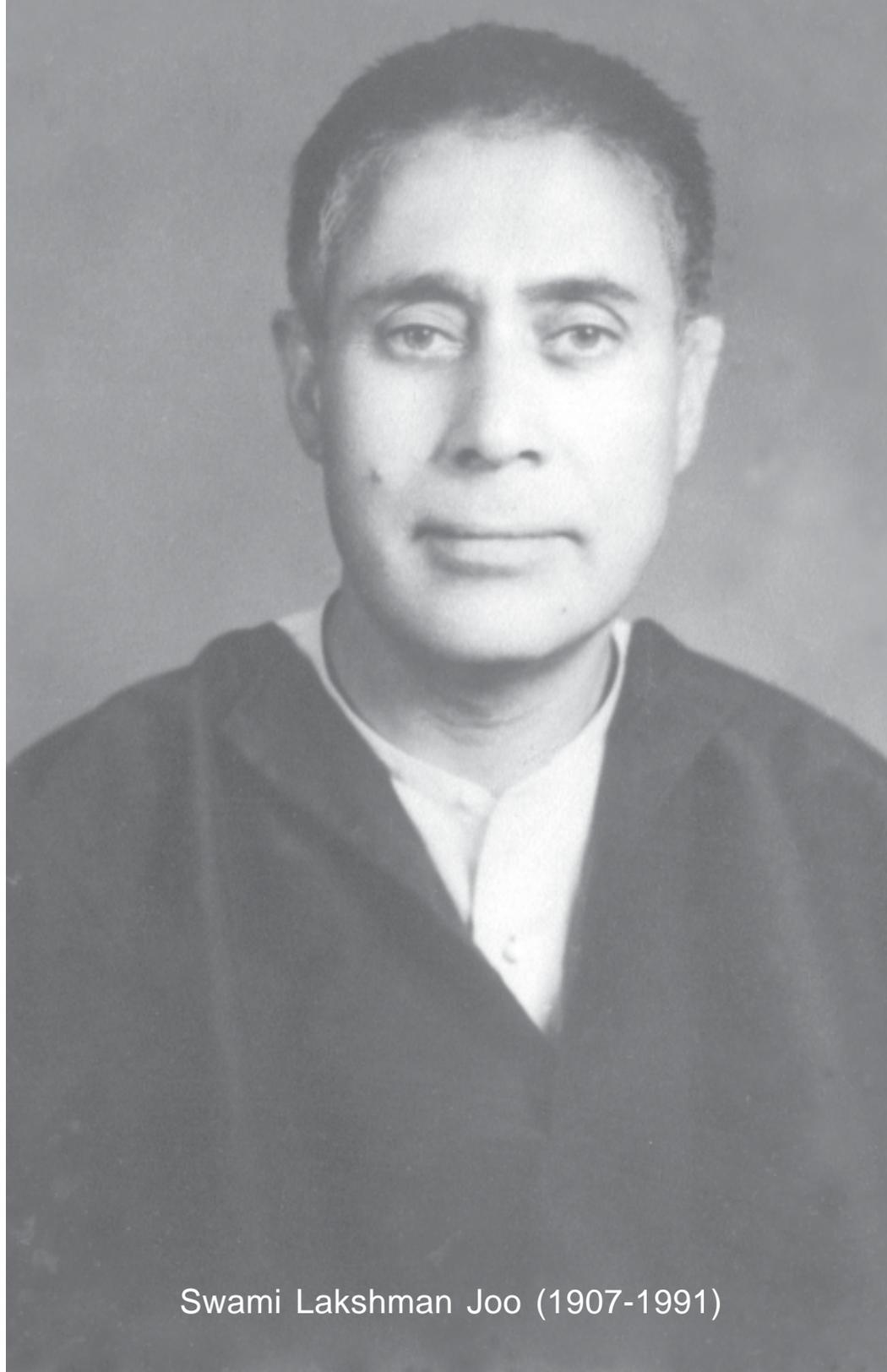
While editing the work for *The Mountain Path* liberties were taken with the introduction and the commentary on the text for the sake of compression — Editor.

The first syllable, *bhai*, is explained in two different ways, meaning fear (*bhaya*) or refulgent light (*bha*), both meanings referring to the nature of Bhairava. All-pervasiveness (*vyapakatva*) is a constant characteristic of the Divine Reality.

Abhinavagupta explains the word *Bhairava* in different contexts: In the Tantraloka he describes the nature of Bhairava which can be realized in oneself, with the awareness: “ ‘I am manifesting the universe in the space of my own consciousness, I am the creator, being of the nature of everything’ — by this act of awareness, one attains the nature of Bhairava.” The same non-dual I-consciousness is applied to the states of continued existence (*stbithi*) and dissolution (*samhara*). “The most perfect Consciousness of Bhairava is in its essence unrestrained, non-relative, delightful flash of knowership”.

Vijnana Bhairava is a dialogue between Shiva and Shakti or Bhairava and Bhairavi.... Her questions which appear complicated at first sight can be reduced to one fundamental question: How can the various differentiations of the Divine Energies and their manifestation in language, through letters consisting of vowels and consonants, and mantras constituted by these letters, reveal the essence of the transcendent Divinity? Is transcendence (*paratvam*) not free of all divisions and differentiation (*niskalatvena*)? How can it then assume a composite nature (*sakalatve na tad bhavet*)? And this is not just a theoretical or abstract question. The Goddess (and with her, every seeker or aspirant) wants to gain practical realization of the same transcendence, and for this she is asking the grace of her Lord (*prasadam kuru me natha*), to cut the knot of her doubts (*nihsesam chindhi samsayam*).

This text cannot be understood without an insight into the nature of Shakti, the Divine Energy. In her two aspects, she is both, the cause of the multiplicity of the universe, and of the manifold differentiations of language (*sabdarasi*), as well as the cause of the return to the Source, of unification and union with Shiva. One of the most frequently quoted phrases of the Vijnana Bhairava is the definition of Shakti as “the face (mouth, door, opening) of Shiva”: *savimukham ihocyate* which occurs in the context where the non-



Swami Lakshman Joo (1907-1991)

difference of Shiva and Shakti is emphatically stated. This non-difference is compared to that of fire and its power to burn. It is only by entering the state of Shakti by a contemplation free from all differentiation that one becomes one with Shiva. And a very simple simile is used to explain the function of Shakti: Just like the light of a lamp or the rays of the sun illumine space, in the same way Shiva is known by means of Shakti. Shakti is therefore the mediatrix *par excellence*, and all the ways and means of attaining union with Shiva are her aspects.

The Vijnana Bhairava teaches 112 methods or means of concentration and of union with the Divine, traditionally called *dharanas*. However, the text itself does not speak of *dharanas*. It calls these ways “undistracted instructions” (*nistarariga upadesa*), or spiritual instructions leading the mind to an undistracted, “waveless” state. In another summary verse these methods are called *yukti*, which has the double implication of *yoga* as spiritual method and as union with the Divine. At the conclusion of the Tantra, its teaching is simply called “the supreme, immortal Ultimate” (*paramdmrtamuttamam*), all adjectives without a corresponding noun. This reluctance to name or objectify the mystical teaching and the Ultimate Reality to which it leads the sincere aspirant, is a characteristic feature of this text, which hesitates to make any metaphysical statements. There is also no attempt to make a system out of the various means or spiritual practices. If they appear divergent, there is yet an underlying unity in that the different methods aim primarily at emptying the mind of its distractive and conditioned thoughts (*vikalpa*), in Swamiji’s expression, at “unminding the mind”, in a state of *nirvikalpa*.

We find an incredible variety of spiritual practices and ways of discovering pure consciousness in all kinds of conditions and circumstances. In fact, no realm of experience is excluded from the field of spiritual realization, from the body with its various functions, the mind and imaginative meditation (*bhavana*), external and internal situations, the universe, as well as traditional methods such as *mudra* (mystical attitudes of the body), *mantra*, devotion to Shiva, and others. The Vijnana Bhairava ... is unique in that everything, from the

most ordinary daily experience to the most sublime contemplation, can be used for attaining God Consciousness. It offers thus a practical application of the Trika maxim that “everything is contained in everything” (*sarvam sarva-tmakam*), and that everything is a manifestation of the supreme, Divine Consciousness.

An attentive reading of the text and, even more so, the practice of even one of the *dharanas*, can reveal the hidden connections and can lead to a perfect harmony (*samatva*) between the inner and the outer, oneself and the other, the body, the universe and the Divine. Swami Lakshman Joo was the perfect guide on this path.



14. This state of Bhairava is free from the limitations of space, time and form. It is not particularized by a specific place or designation. In reality, it is inexpressible, because it cannot be described.

15. It is filled internally with the bliss of one’s own experience, and it is beyond the realm of thought. This state which is always full is the state of Bhairavi who is Bhairava himself.

16. His body of glory should be known as immaculate, all-inclusive fullness.

In this supreme reality, who can be the object of worship and who is there to be pleased?

18. Since there is never any difference between Shakti (Energy) and the Lord of Energy, and between the attribute and the possessor of the attribute (substance), therefore the supreme Shakti is not different from the supreme Self (*paratman*).

Just as between energy and the holder of energy, there is no differentiation at all to be found. There is always abheda — there is unity between the energy and the holder of the energy, Shakti and Shiva. There is no differentiation.

20. When one who enters the state of Energy realizes the non-distinction (from it), then he becomes one with Shiva. Shakti (Energy) is called the entrance (leading) to Shiva.

When you endeavour to enter in the state of energy and still retain the individual state, you do not enter in that state of energy, for in the end you always have to throw off the individual state. Unless you ignore your individuality, universality will not rise, so you have to enter in the state of energy first, afterwards that non-differentiation comes in your consciousness, then there is no difference between energy and the holder of energy. When non-distinction arises in you, when you feel that the differentiation has gone, you have already become one. You feel that these are one and you feel that it is you. You are not the feeler.

33. if one concentrates one's awareness on anything, be it an empty space, a wall, or a worthy disciple, this (energy of concentration) will merge by itself and bestow grace.

The Energy of Lord Siva is revealed there and then. This energy revealed in that voidness which has been the object of practice is the giver of boons. It is revealed on that wall on which one-pointedness has been focused. It is revealed in the heart of the disciple and that disciple will also be illuminated at once.

49. If one merges one's senses in the space of the heart, i.e. at the centre between the two halves of the heart-lotus with an undistracted mind, then, O Blessed One, one attains supreme blessedness.

Hrdyakase nilinaksah: *The one whose thought is centred on the ether of the heart; in the voidness of the heart which is situated between two lotuses therein, above and below. One lotus is facing upwards and the other lotus is facing downwards. In between there is the ether of the heart; the word akasa does not only mean sky. Nilinaksah: whose attention is focused without the intrusion of any thoughts. Ananya-cetah, when he attains perfect one-pointedness in this process, he attains the glory of entering in the Kingdom of God-consciousness.*

57. While perceiving the Reality of Siva in this whole universe upto the ultimate limit by the method of the 'stages' (*adhvan*), one will experience the great awakening.

This is another way of supreme dharana. You just have to put some additions to it. Just sit or stand outside in your garden. While standing see this whole universe. Imagine that around you this whole universe

exists and there you see adhva-prakriya. How great is this universe! How wide and vast is this universe! What is there below, and what is there above? Just imagine these 118 worlds around you; above you, below you, below your body. You have to imagine that this whole universe is my own God-consciousness. Just imagine, I am pervading each and every part of this universe consisting of 118 worlds.

75. One should concentrate on the state when sleep has not yet come, but the external awareness has disappeared (between waking and sleep) — there the supreme Goddess reveals herself.

When sleep has not yet come: when wakefulness is over and sleep has not yet come, if you realize that state in-between by your mind, the supreme energy of God consciousness will appear to you. This is sambhava state because there is no support.

There is no drowsiness there. It is just awareness. It is only when awareness is developed in such a way that you are aware of entering in the dreaming state. If you maintain that awareness when you have to be operated in a surgical theatre and you are given chloroform, you cannot be affected by that if you maintain that awareness. Those people cannot be afraid of chloroform, because they are always aware. How can they forget their being?

You are aware in sleep and in-between sleep. You know where wakefulness has ended and where the dreaming state has started.

85. One should contemplate the entire sky which is the nature of Bhairava as if it is pervading one's head. Then (one experiences) everything as the form of Bhairava and one enters into the glory of His nature.

92. One should meditate on one's own Self in the form of the vast sky, unlimited in all directions, then the Power of Consciousness is free from any support and reveals her own nature.

99. All knowledge is without a cause, without a support and deceptive. In reality this (knowledge) does not belong to anybody. Contemplating in this way, O Dear One, one becomes Shiva.

This is the next process. This objective cognition — jnanam — has no cause to rise. How does it arise? It is a wonder. This field of objective

cognition is niradharam, baseless. It has no support. Hence it is bhramatmakam. You only feel the rise of this cognition, but the objective cognition which rises in you does not really rise at all. This field of objective cognition is rising in you, in the daily routine of your life, it rises in you always. But in fact, it does not rise at all, because it is nirnimittam, it has no cause to rise. How does it rise? It is supportless. If it is there, it is an illusion, bhramatmakam. The rise of cognition of the objective field is illusion. It is an illusive perception. This perception is not real perception, this is what he says in this process.

In Vedanta they call not only objective consciousness illusion but also subjective consciousness. That means they have ignored that "I"-consciousness, so this is a different school of thought. In fact there is no objectivity, because there is no cause for it to rise. There is no support of this objectivity, excepting that you have projected this illusive "I"-ness on this objective consciousness, from your birth to innumerable births. You have created this perception of objectivity. Objective perception is not at all established.

100. The One which is characterized as Consciousness is residing in all the bodies; there is no differentiation in anything. Therefore, if a person realizes that everything is full of that (very Consciousness), he conquers the world of becoming.

Sarva-dehesu: in all the bodies, from that of a tiny, feeble insect to the body of Brahma; from insect to Brahma, the consciousness is the same, without any differentiatedness. viseso nasti kutracit: There is no difference in caitanya; consciousness in that small, tiny ant or germ or worm, or in the body of Brahma, or in the body of the sun. So in this way, when any sadhaka fixes his awareness, that caitanya is the same in each and every object, he conquers the duality of the objective world. He rises from duality to the monistic state of God consciousness.

101. If one makes one's mind stable in the various states of desire, anger, greed, delusion, intoxication or envy, then the Reality alone will remain which is underlying them.

102. If one meditates on the universe as a magic show, or as a painting, or as a moving picture, contemplating on everything in this way, one experiences bliss.

This whole universe is a magician's world. This is not the real world. indrajala-mayam visvam: Just imagine that this whole universe is only magic, a magical trick. It has no substance in it. No substance of its own, except God consciousness. This visva is only a magician's trick. Do you know who is the great magician? The Lord himself is the great magician. He has created this trick and placed it before us and we think we are differentiated although we are undifferentiated. It seems that we are differentiated from each other. But in fact, we are undifferentiated.

This is only expansion of one's self. This is not differentiatedness of one's self. Expansion is vikasa: blooming. Just as the bud blooms, that is vikasa, and this whole universe is the vikasa, expansion of your own self, of svatantrya. This is Shaivism. This is not maya. This is not illusion. This is only expansion of your own nature.

115. By standing above a deep well or any abyss and fixing one's eyes (on the bottom of the well or abyss), one becomes completely free from thoughts, and immediately the mind will certainly be dissolved.

Put your sight down to the bottom of that well or that ditch. Do not think anything. See only the depth of the well, do not see the water.

Do not let any other thought get entry in your mind. Sadyah; at that very moment, instantaneously, citta-layah sphutam: your mind will not function.

It will become unminded and thus get entry in God consciousness.

116. Wherever the mind goes, whether outside or within, there itself is the state of Siva. Since He is all-pervading, where else could the mind go?

117. Whenever the universal Consciousness of the all-pervading Lord is revealed through any of the sense-organs, since their nature is the same (universal Consciousness), then by absorption into pure Consciousness the fullness of the Self (will be attained).

118. At the beginning and end of sneezing, in a state of fear or sorrow, (standing) on top of an abyss or while fleeing from a battlefield, at the moment of intense curiosity, at the beginning

or end of hunger; such a state comes close to the experience of Brahman.

119. While looking at a particular space the mind should abandon the thought of all remembered objects and thus making the body free from all support, the Lord reveals Himself.

129. Towards whichever object the mind moves, one should withdraw it from there at that very moment. By thus leaving it without support, one will become free from mental agitation.

147. Worship (*puja*) does not consist in offering flowers and other substances. The real worship consists rather in setting one's mind firmly on the supreme void of thought-free consciousness. This worship is an absorption with great fervour and respect.

Worship is not done with flowers, with ghee, with all those things, that you gather from the market and the garden. In that way you cannot do real puja. The real worship is that where your intellect is firmly established.

kriyate drdha: *Where your intellect is firmly established, in the supreme void of thoughtlessness. The thought free and supreme void of cidakasa, consciousness, that is real puja.* hyadardl-layah: *where one merges, with great respect, with great honour. You dissolve. You lose everything. Not with dishonour, not with hatred, but with honour. You merge in that supreme thought-free state of cidakasa.* ▲

Vijnana Bhairava is published by Indica, an excellent book publishing house which specialises in high quality spiritual books. For information about their catalogue you may contact indicabooks@satyam.net.in. Their address is Indica Books, D 40/18 Godowlia, Varanasi 221001, UP, India.

Ozhivil Odukkam

Eternal Repose Upon Annulment

(Withdrawal as Eternal Being)

KANNUDAYA VALLALAR

TRANSLATION BY J.JAYARAMAN

OZHIVIL ODUKKAM is an ancient Tamil classic that focuses entirely on the practice of advaitic insight and was often referred to by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. The title also accommodates the following meanings: 'Inherence upon removal of finitude', 'Inherence in deathless Being'. The author, Kannudaiya Vallalaar, a saint about whom nothing definitive can be established except that he was born anywhere between 14th and 17th century, in Sirkazhi, and that very likely his parents were wealthy, and by his own admission is said to have attained enlightenment merely by contemplation and surrender to Jnana Sambandhar of Sirkazhi, the child Nayanmar Saivite saint, whom he regarded as his guru. Jnana Sambandhar who preceded the author by several centuries, was himself initiated into Jnana when barely a child of three by Siva and Parvati.

"JJ" is resident of the Ashram since 1985 heading the Library and handling the Book Reviews column of *The Mountain Path*, and has served on its editorial board. He is an editorial advisor to the Tamil journal *Ramanodbayam*. His interests range from afforestation and modern science, metrical chanting, mankind and mouna.

This has been an editorial work as well as a translation. The original Tamil work composed of 253 verses in venba metre, laid out in 10 chapters, is extremely terse and replete with similes. The only available 17th century commentary by Tirupporur Chidambara Swamikal is in archaic Tamil and is tilted in favour of Saiva Siddhantic terminology. The advaitic view is however, tenable throughout the text, and is there for one to discern in the only available commentary.

The saint advocates the direct path to Liberation, which is Self-knowledge. He is critical of pedantry and postures yogic or otherwise, and pokes much fun at false disciples and gurus, and their indulgent practices which are touted as aids, but which become the very obstacles to Jnana. It is the ego-mind that sees bondage, nay, *is* bondage, and it is the ego-mind that seeks to transcend itself. The point is subtle, and so the path is razor sharp, fraught with pit-falls. Kannudaiya Vallalaar accords the highest value to guru's grace.

Kannudaya Vallalar stresses the need for sadhana by the seeker in the presence of the guru. He essentially lauds Being and ridicules Becoming. He clearly intends that the subtlety regarding the nature of effort in transcending oneself be understood. The same effort that initially aids the process becomes an obstacle as one progressed. The seeker whose way lay beyond the other bank of a river must use a boat. Reaching the other shore, the wise ones leave the boat behind as burden. A person who had never been to the top of a hill was advised to keep climbing taking one step at a time. How does one know when the top has been reached? When the strategy of taking a step forward becomes counter-productive, one knows! One has 'reached', when any further effort, even the slightest move in any direction takes one 'away'. That is the point of leaping into non-action, the resting place. That is sahaja samadhi. That is the sleeping while awake, jagrat sushupti, of the jivanmukta.

The author often brings out through vibrant similes, the pseudo versus the true guru, the various levels of maturity of seekers according to individual prarabdha, and the evolution of sadhana from its gross levels of action, to the subtle level of non-action.

There is method to the use of similes in Jnana marga. The simile is a hologram, and when held in mind, provides energy for a mental leap into a parallel situation relating self and non-self and their witnessing. A simile establishes through its snap-shot of a familiar life-situation, the mutual involvement of the elements portrayed in it. The relationships of the elements within each simile, adequately represent a situation during sadhana, relating seeker, guru, god and the Self. The receiving of the simile from the guru is the sravana of Upanishadic transmission.

When the dynamics of the scene within the simile is repeatedly held in view through practice, it generates a current of meditation. This is the stage called manana in self-enquiry. The seeker then transposes into this space of relationship the contextually 'parallel' situation relating the seeker and the world, and then the two, with the target pointed to as Self, God and, Brahman or Siva. By dwelling on a simile, one 'becomes' a participant in the relationships within the simile. One becomes a node, as it were, in the network of the situation painted by the simile. From this 'position' one learns to make that leap into the 'parallel' network of the Whole. Manana is indeed intellectual, but it soon generates an abiding understanding, which begins to transform the seeker's life of sadhana. In advaitic sadhana the percolation of the practice into one's natural state, is the assimilation called nididhyaasana. The process could be compared with the way one learns to stay atop a bicycle. Initially, 'finding' balance is something that demands the learner's utmost mental focus. Later 'balance' is experienced as a state, in fits and starts, and with perseverance, becomes natural, becomes one's nature, and no longer conflicts with any activity requiring mental effort.

Many of the similes are new to us, drawn as they are from rustic scenes of the ecological life of a not too distant past of south India. There are some rustic similes, which have become vague through passage of times. Sri Munagala's English manuscript, paraphrasing the original Tamil verses, is invaluable.

I have provided a comprehensive commentary on the theme of author's focus using the context of the first few verses. The rest of the

verses are merely paraphrased in a way that the simile is stated clearly. This leaves the seeker-reader to develop the current of meditation by unravelling the simile. This is in keeping with the author's stated intention that the reader must gain the prerequisite for the supreme experience by going through each simile as a meditation.

The supreme is conventionally termed as Self, or I-I. The term non-Self would then refer to the void of maya, which is the false division composed of the individual (self), and the world (non-self). I have used 'self' and 'non-self' as general terms to denote the various pairs of this false division; namely, seer and seen, the 'I' and the world, the jiva and the jagat, knower and knowable, enjoyer and enjoyable, and so on. The false division of self and non-self, is actually maintained by the self. As Bhagavan points out, it is the self, which says that the world exists. The non-self (the world) never announces itself independently. Therefore, even though the pair arises together, the root is to be sought in the self by the self.

Benedictory Verse

The King of gurus, Jnana Sambandha, of abundant grace, vanquisher of debate and dichotomy (in the form of learned arrogance externally, and greed internally), placed his holy lotus-feet on (my) head and spoke (and this work issuing forth from here is the result). (This is) in order that all lovers (of the truth of Self), would, through the loss of the sense of reality ascribed to individual being (which a reading of this work would occasion), drink as a result of that, all the ambrosia welling up of itself.

Text

1. The swirling dance of celebration called the Veda-Agama (ever falls short in its attempts to circumscribe the Self). This dance is the *abhishekam* (worshipful consecration) over the Meru Hill (which is the basis of creation, visualized as the backbone of both, the body and, of the world that is experienced through its various centres). May the Sun of direct Self-knowledge arising, like 'the hand raised pointing skywards', in this darkness of divided self occasion, upon

the removal of (this) dark error, the repose into true Being. May it be the rain of Grace solemnizing this (poetic) undertaking (of mine).

Commentary

(i) *'the hand (formerly) raised pointing skyward'*: a child of three years Jnana Sambandha, whom the author of this work regards as his guru, was left unattended on the banks of the temple tank at Sirkazhi, while his parents went in for the holy dip. The child cried out of hunger. From the skies Siva and Parvati came down on the bull-mount. Mother Parvati gave the child a gold cup with milk drawn from Her breasts. Then they ascended the skies. Returning from the dip, the parents found the child smiling, with streaks of milk in the corners of the mouth and questioned him about it. Jnana Sambandha [called so as he had received the milk of Jnana] simply pointed with his outstretched hand to the divine vision in the sky and said:

"The One with ear-rings, and mounted on a bull, and crested with white crescent moon, and was Himself white with the ashes from the cremation-ground smeared on the body—has stolen my heart!"

(ii) *"The hand raised skyward"*: this at the same time, imagery around villagers who gathered in boisterous festivity. In the midst of their loud revelry of a particular kind of circling dance and song the chief guest arrives, and the headman 'produces' instantly stillness in the assembled body, by a mere upward wave of the cane in his hand.

The eternity of the Veda-Agamas derives from their relentless attempts in pointing to the Self. The Self, though lying beyond pointing, is nevertheless pointed out, in the way the finger is used to point out an object. This is the "branch-tip-to-crescent-moon" (*shaakhaa chandra nyaaya*) method of the Rishis. The story is told of the seeker who is unable to see the faint crescent moon, one night before new moon. The teacher first determines whatever the student is able to see; in this case, a tree branch. He is led step by step to the tip of a particular leaf. And then he is told to look just a bit 'beyond that point'. It is a situation requiring a tiny shift of eye; and this is something the seeker must himself do. This tiny shift also calls for a

change of focus. Focused on the leaf-tip one must become aware of the double image of the moon that lies in the background, and then shifting the eye ever so slightly, this background double image must be focused on to reveal the experience.

Even so, this 'action show' of worldly toil relapses into mere appearance (the boisterous villagers freezing in action, as if the whole scene collapsed into a painting), when Mauna is intuited. We thought we saw a snake, and looking closer found it to be a superb painting. The snake, is the self in this waking world with fear and need as its currency, and action as its vehicle. When the involved self feels the supreme need, and thus takes the supreme action of investigation into the 'quality' of its own reality, the enquiring self (along with its non-self) is witnessed, and collapses into the Self, as the snake collapses into the painting.

The intuition of Self is the silencing of the 'assembly', the seeing of the 'snake' for what it is; its reduction to a mere 'painting'. The abidance as Self is the natural state; the natural dropping away of the need of enquiry itself.

When self undertakes self-enquiry, there is growing stability in realizing the falsity of the reality ascribed to its sense of existence as a limited being. This is the abhishekam over the Linga, as Hill and Heart. Then suddenly, revealing the waking as waking-dream, the Self abides as *jivanmukti*.

2. By what study can the seeker of real-self (ie lover of the Self) really hope to gain and repose in the conviction regarding the falsity of the self-experience which now limits him, if the gracious Sadguru, did not bring him to absolute stillness by his 'look', just as an elephant dreaming itself to be running wild in rut, is stopped in its stride and transfixed by an awe-inspiring look from the majestic lion?

Commentary

A temple elephant reposing in sleep was dreaming that it was running about in rut, and was awakened when it was shocked into stillness in its dream-tracks by the look of a mighty dream-lion.

The temple elephant is actually reposing in stillness. Yet, ignorantly it experiences itself as a rutting elephant facing a lion in a strange forest. This is an illusory divide in mind as seer and seen.

The reposing elephant untouched by dream events, is the non-dual Self beyond transient states of waking and dream and the in-between.

The rutting elephant, is the non-dual Self appearing as the self in this waking world. The forest is the non-dual Self appearing as the waking world of the self. The lion is the non-dual Self appearing as guru before the seeker. Such is the nature of maya!

The tyranny of ignorance of one's true self is pointed out. The supreme Self is not bound and hence does not seek. The self which cries out 'I am bound', is the self that must seek release.

Could the rutting dream-elephant terminate the dream-world by itself? No. Could an event within the dream cause an awakening? Yes. Such is the nature of the maya!

The triad composed of the dream-elephant, its dream-actions, in the dream-forest, is clearly seen to be false. It is ignorance of true self, which appears as the self pitted against the non-self. Within the dream, the elephant in rut considers itself as awake and acting. So also, the self assumes its sense of being awake as being really real, and by that token, takes its waking world as really real. The play of seeking and gaining knowledge within this ignorance, is itself false. Actions which proceed from such ignorance cannot cause a true awakening.

The simile indicates that the self can, by its own efforts only advance up to the point of realizing that its own reality the Self, lies beyond grasping in worldly terms. Suppose the rutting elephant had been told, "Your true self is the temple elephant. Search for it!". It is certain that it could never truly find its Self as long as the success of the search meant coming face to face with the temple elephant!

The self cannot hope to make that leap of awakening to Self, solely by controlling body, breath or thought. For these tools are only as real as their owner. However, such action no doubt purifies one's focus. But, like the carrying of the boat even after crossing a river, these become worldly distractions beyond a certain point. They begin to strengthen the self's role as the 'doer' in the non-self. And

this only lends greater reality to the self, rather than exposing its falsity.

As motivated worldly action falls away, the self is left with a growing longing for grace; for a glimpse while 'here' of the 'other-worldly' Truth. The guru appears 'within' the falsity! This is the penetrating look of the lion in the simile. The 'action' of self-realization is a transcendental leap of awakening. The leap cannot be caused through any worldly technique. It requires a total suspension of worldly focus, as the prerequisite for its occurrence through the guru's look of grace. During the suddenness of shock, or joy, or during the moments of waking up from sleep, or during samadhi state born of reduction of thought, the self is suspended without the body or world, and lies between ignorance and awakening.

The Maharshi points out, explaining the subtlety concerning the traditional necessity for a guru when it comes to Liberation. It is certain that no knowledge is possible without a guru. However, the sadguru commands: the knowledge of one's real self, the abidance as the natural Self, demands only unlearning whatever knowledge the self has acquired about itself!

The guru is necessary here too, just as the target is necessary for hitting the target! He is the Self that is automatically revealed through the unlearning.

There is also a subtle point regarding the role of self-effort. For the sudden waking to occur, the elephant's attention must meet the lion's look. The necessity of meeting the sadguru's Look is implied here. There has to be an 'engagement'. The seeker's attention must be away from the world for the guru's Look to accomplish the 'inner' work.

Can that Look, like that received by thousands from Ramana Maharshi during his life-time, be met with now? The simile establishes that the elephant as well as the lion are manifestations of one mind. The guru's Look of grace is not limited to a flowing from a physical form in front of us. The act of self-enquiry is in itself the engagement with the guru's Look. Indeed, it is the guru who looks out from within us! The Self, appearing as guru, as part of the non-self, is said

to push the seeker inward from without; and this means the disciple abandons the obsession with the without, and increasingly seeks the truth within. And the guru pulls one from within. This is the elephant-lion look-engagement. It is the harbinger of the awakening as the Heart.

3. Keep off from wage-earners and barterers parading as gurus; imposters all! The supreme Guru (is one) who awaits (the disciple) and establishes (the disciple in his own state). He does so, like Time (which, by overseeing the ever changing moments, provides rhythmic duration). There are no words adequate to sing his praise, (as) mind cannot grasp (Him).

Notes

'wage-earner and barterer gurus': 'gurus' who are only labourers who seek wages, and traders who seek profit. Those impostors, whose actions in this world cannot proceed without some petty personal motive or the other.

'mind cannot grasp': this is best 'grasped' through a simile. On a big white screen is projected the colourful scene of a vast audience seated before a small white screen hung on the wall of a hall. They await the start of their movie. The white 'cloth' of the small screen is merely a patch of unobstructed white light, and therefore that white portion is identical with the lighted white cloth of the big screen 'under' it.

From the shadow-audience, the shadow-hero walks up to the white cloth of the small shadow-screen and touches it. The question that arises is: can it be that the hero, while touching the white of the small screen, is simultaneously touching the white of the big screen too?

Technically, the white is one. But within the conceived reality, the answer must be 'No'. The small screen has the same level of reality as the space within the shadow-hall in which it is located. The white of the small screen is 'spatially' experienced by the hero as existing in front of the wall of the hall, and not as a piece of the white of any big screen.

This simile indicates that as long as worldly focus remains, one's being can never reach 'out' to grasp the Self, which is one's true being. It is as if the one space called Self, appears as two overlapping but divided spaces, called self and its non-self, and each self experiences separation from its non-self due to mere concept. The nature of this concept concerns ignorance of self.

The 'personal spaces' of individuals in this world, are ultimately a hindrance to one another. This is because all creatures seek more of the 'shared space' for themselves. Space is loved by all, being the passive universally accommodating friend. But then, the one who begins to 'wake' up from the sleep of ignorance, begins to realize that what passes for waking reality is more a dream. This witnessing, is a stand-'point' which lies beyond location. It is the Heart. It is itself the Self, the jnana-space (*chidakasa*), which accommodates the mirage-like void called (*chittakasa*) where anything and everything founded on ignorance of self exists. Just as formless clay evolves into pot without changing its clay nature, so too ignorance of rope leads to wrong knowledge of snake, where the ignorance of rope persists. So too, the *chittakasa*, which is the absence of enquiry into self, manifests the ignorant self and its waking world. The self experiences itself within the physical space (*bhutamasa*) of the waking world.

4. There are those whose spasmodic words of 'sagely' advice are really only the ravings born of their 'seniority' by virtue of their 'ripeness' in the (three) taints of ego! Their teachings, lacking the authority of the natural state, are directed towards unfit 'students' who themselves babble inconstantly as if possessed by malefic spirits!

Their fates are linked as in the story of the shepherd who jumped into a spate which was bearing away a brood of bears. Both parties perished through battling the relentless embrace.

Notes

(i) "*shepherd and the brood of bears*": a river was in spate. A mother bear attempting to save her brood which had fallen into it, was swept away by the currents, with the brood clinging to her. A shepherd

seated by the banks of the river, took the black flotsam to be sheep and jumped in to save them and for personal profit. Mother bear took him to be a god-send of a wooden plank!

The false teacher deluded by worldly craving, regards unworthy students to be worthy of his self-professed wisdom. The unworthy student sees in the 'guru' a comfortable plank for his own survival. The 'guru' trapped by his own actions, cannot forsake the chosen group of students for 'greener' pastures. And even if the 'guru' did try to break free, the students by then are motivated enough not to let go of a rare opportunity to gain worldly satisfaction that came their way through the 'guru's' grace!

They perish together.

(ii) '*the three taints*': the three shortcomings, *malams*.

Namely,

(a) *anava malam*: the inability to see the mirage-like nature of the sense of separate self. The self ascribes to the waking world the reality it ascribes to itself. The snake is falsely experienced in a rope. The snake itself is false. But the eyes of the snake surely survey the tail of the snake! The head of the 'snake' is the self. The tail that the head sees, is the world, the non-self. The Self is falsely experienced by the self as the triad. The triad consists of (i) the self, as knower, experiencing (ii) a world, as knowable, and (iii) the knowledge linking the two

(b) *karma malam*: the inability to see that any action towards a portion of the non-self in order to ease a craving, breeds in due course, an avalanche of 'corrective' reactions. The division, as self and non-self is itself false. Going along with this falsity, it would have been 'ecologically' tolerable if the self regarded the non-self in the same way it regards itself, namely, as a whole being. But, instead, the self, aggravating the error, regards the non-self as a multiplicity, and relates with it in piece-meal fashion.

(c) *maya malam*: (i) the inability to see that the satisfaction of one's craving for a sense-object did not cause the happiness that one experienced upon gaining that object. For the gaining of the sense-object merely removed the intolerable 'itch' in one's mind for that sense-object. That was all! When the itch vanished for a moment,

the natural state of happiness called Self 'manifested', in the way the sun 'shines forth' in between clouds; (b) the inability to see the trick of mind which seeks the cause of every experience in order to package it as a 'cause-effect' connection (in other words as memory). When the formless ananda of Self 'shines forth' in between cravings, the self cannot find the cause for that experience, since it is formless. The self then connects the ananda-experience with the most recent form that was experienced, which happens to be the sense-object experienced just 'a moment ago'. Thus in every occurrence of ananda (which is one's natural state, as it is Self-effulgent), the self (as mind), 'remembers' that object-A gave object-A ananda; and object B gave object-B ananda...and so on. And voila!...a world of a variety of 'different' anandas.

5. Can a blind wretch panning for gold in abandoned dirt-heaps be christened Kubera, the Lord of wealth? Can the mother sheep lead her young ones to the delights of the sweetness hidden within the hard cane? Can those teachers who are themselves within the ambit of the 36 tattvas, establish the seeker in the transcendence of mauna, as the sadguru who is the embodiment of the grace of mauna itself?

Notes:

(i) *Kubera*: treasurer of Indra, king of the gods.

(ii) *Mother sheep*: the mother sheep is herself incapable of chewing through the hard cane to discover the sweet juice within. Her knowledge about the use of the sugar-cane is limited to the pleasures of its salty leaves. Leading the baby novices to the higher pleasures of the sweetness hidden in the sugar-cane, is possible only for the elephant mother, who has tasted it all in one wrench and gulp!

The kriya guru is contrasted with the jnana guru. The former initiates the seeker into the joy he himself finds in the field of mantra and tantra. A utility has become a stagnation; has become an end in itself. The jnana guru initiates the ripe seeker into the natural state of mauna, which lies beyond the *tattvas*.

(iii) 36 *tattvas*: 36 categories which blue-print the evolution of the seer-seen duality.

In the analysis according to schools of Saivism, the first 5 are suddha (pure) *tattvas* comprising non-dual dominance. The next 7 are the suddha-asuddha (pure-impure) *tattvas*, comprising the cosmic aspect of the seer-seen phenomenon. The remaining 24 are the asuddha (impure) *tattvas*, comprising the microcosmic aspect of the seer-seen.

In the analysis according to Sankhya/Vedanta, 4 *tattvas* represent the causal, 25 *tattvas* represent the subtle, and 7 represent the gross aspect of creation.

Such analysis serves as exercise in learning the process of discarding. Upon gathering the house dust by using a broom, one ought to throw it all away. It is wasteful to analyse the nature of waste!

6. Is it possible for anyone to escape the consequences of the error of instructing another in the way to Liberation, without oneself abiding naturally as the witness? One shudders even to think of it! This is like the traveller who wished to reach a far-off village he had never been to before. He received instructions from a stranger who had never been there himself. He soon loses way, and finds himself in a wilderness, unable to retrace steps to his own village, or to find the road ahead.

The 'teacher' claiming mastery in a field he is a stranger to, must pay for his hypocrisy eventually and in full. The 'seeker' pays for his ignorance soon enough.

7. The jnana guru is one who watches the ebbing away of ignorance in the disciple, and who, upon discerning the maturing of that self in dissolving in the waves of bliss that arise, fixes him without tremor, with the stillness of his Look.

The Nature of the Transmission

8. Just as a bee drinks the honey from far-away flowers and when full, returns to disgorge it into the cell of the honey-comb, so too, in due course the Supreme Bliss of the master will surely well up and overflow in a sacred transference towards the disciple.

As the seasons of the year follow one another, each silently bidding its time, the devotee should serve his master, without demanding this or that, and await the master's initiation. The demand that seeks no object other than oneself, is itself tapas. The communication manifesting from the guru's mauna, is the Sruti (Vedas) proceeding from the Self.

(i) *'initiation'*: the guru, as the plenum of non-duality, destroys the trace of duality in the disciple through a sacred communication. The grace could flow through his look, a thought, a touch or, through words of instruction. Sri Ramana Maharshi explaining the jnani's preferred mode of initiation through look, said that the other modes required the additional effort of manifesting traces of mind and body.

9. As a lighted lamp, or the moon, or the Sun is to darkness, the word of the master transcends even grace (in destroying the disciple's ignorance). Know that there is no trace of egoism.

It is (permanent in effect) like a rain of ambrosia. It is (free from personality) like a voice from the sky, and is well intentioned (like a good-omen as seen from the effect on the disciple).

Note

(i) *'transcends even grace'*: when something really valuable is lost and is regained or replaced due to another's personal toil, then the help received from that person has substance. But when a person wrongly concludes that a valuable is lost, while it is all the while on his own person, then the loss is only notional. To regain the lost object, it is enough if the wrong notion be removed. The indebtedness to another towards 'regaining' that valuable is also only notional. The notional nature of the 'gaining' of Self through the guru's grace is indicated.

10. To the compassionate One, the enemy called ego is as dead as an illusion is devoid of reality. He is the very Bliss of Self congealed into a form, which looms in front of the disciple, like the shadow-person in the clear sky. The words that pour forth from such a one, are like:

(a) [those of] a man possessed, (b) [the cries of] a warrior, (c) [words of] an emperor, (d) [the public declarations of] a love-

sick youth, or (e) [the self-destructive obsession of] a suicidal maniac.

(i) *'shadow person'*: there is a traditional recourse to prophesy through the 'shadow-person', which consists in intensely watching one's reflection in oil, and then looking up to find one's form outlined against the blue skies, and then receiving instructions from that. The guru is one's own true Self, and appears before the disciple, in order to give initiation.

(ii)(a) *'words of a man possessed'*: there is no resident ego in the shadow-like guru.

(b) *'the cries of a warrior'*: the guru is resolved on killing everything opposed to jnana.

(c) *'the words of an emperor'*: the guru's words carry authority.

(d) *'the public declarations of a love-sick youth'*: in the Sangam culture of ancient south India, any love-lorn youth could claim his woman by mounting a dummy horse and declaring his love, for all to notice night or day. His words would focus on his lady and nothing else. So too, in the case of the ripe disciple, the guru's words steer clear of advocating gross sadhanas, all of which strengthen doer-ship, and instead, focus only on atma vichara.

(f) *'the self-destructive obsession of a suicidal maniac'*: the guru is intent on the gain of bliss, solely through destroying the ego-self.



BOOK REVIEWS

TULU TALES: A Suta chronicle: by G. Kameshwar. 2004. Pub: Rupa & Co, Ansari Rd, New Delhi 110002. pp.145, Rs250

India, as the author Kāmēshwar says, “is a fascinating place; you scratch the earth—and you find stories”. Reading this travelogue of the Konkan coast, one ‘surfs’ with the author who rarely fails to delight us in his assumed role as – nay, *becoming* would be more true –the Sûta of the raconteur tradition.

The travelogue arose out of a bunch of coincidences. The photo of an unidentified sadhu, ‘come down to me from my grandfather’, resurfaces during a Web surf, and it turns out he had become the head of a Math in Shirali near Gokarna and passed away in 1966. His Birth Centenary falls this year, and the current Head of the same Math visits Arunachala, which happens to be very close to the author’s heart! Given this, is it any wonder that the travelogue of his visit to the Konkan coast itself should evolve ‘in a space-time-name-form warp’?

This western coast, is “known to the minute hand as Konkan coast, and to the hour hand as Parasurâma Kshêtra, Tulu Nâdu, Dandakâranya, and Go (cow)–country. This latter comprising the region to the west of the Go-dâvari which arises from Go-mukh (cow’s mouth). The land from Go-rashtra (Goa) in the north, through Go-karna (cow’s ear), and southward along the coast to Go-pâla (cowherd) Krishna at Udipi.

The author (the reviewer ‘GJK’ of these columns), himself undergoes a similar warp —software-professional becoming Sûta, and taking the reader along as it were! We are wrenched back repeatedly to the ‘reality’ of the non-puranic *now*. The chronicler’s *now* is often delightful for its accuracy in the puranic-flavoured caricature

of the real-life pentad of the pilgrimage, who happen to be the in-law trio, and wife and daughter of our ‘Suta chauffeur’.

[Sûta are one of the ‘tribes’ of wandering minstrels who sing Purânic tales in dialect and contemporary context, and kept alive the springs of the four great human values, Purushârthas: Dharma (ethic of live and let live) tempering Kâma (gratification), and also the acquisition of Artha (wealth) which in its higher meaning culminated in the true wealth of Moksha, liberation. The Sûta chroniclers —may their sort of tribe increase in today’s multi-media— were literally everywhere in those times— rustic to royalty, moving through settlements deep in the southern forests, all the way up to urban Banaras and beyond, doing their not a little bit, harmonizing human motives by weaving the four threads of these Purushârthas, into the fabric of stories packaging stable social order.

The chapter ‘Gokarna Gourmet: a Soota special!’ is a ‘stable’ Kâmeshwar concoction connecting the various meanings of the prefix *go* in *gokarna* (eye, ear, bow-string, arrow, a snake — since it uses its eye as ear, the Vedas, the river Ganga etc) with a plethora of stories linked through Mahâbhârata, Râmâyana and the Bhâgavatam. Further explorations include Gokarna’s fertile ‘connections’: Âdi Sankara and Hastâmalaka, the Sringeri Sankara lineage, the Datta lineage, the Tamil nâyanmârs Appar and Jnânasambandhar, and saint Jnâneshwar. We learn of the Pallava temple Tiru-k-gokarnam near Pudukkottai, and of Vâlmiki’s Hanumân reporting his birth at Gokarna to Sîta at the Asoka Vana.

Gokarna is richly connected with penances. It is the place where Bhagîrâta did one-legged penance for Ganga to flow earthwards. It is the place of Râvana’s

penances and the connected episodes of Bhadrakâli and the Âtmalinga. A vast and very ancient temple to Gokarneswara (Konesa) was in Trincomalee in Sri Lanka, to whom Ravana and his wife offered worship. Called Dakshin Kailas (Kailas of the South) it was plundered and decimated by Constantine de Sa in 1624 who used the material for a Portugese fort.

Kâvyakantha Ganapati Muni reached Gokarna by steamboat and in the many months that followed conducted his tapasya there alongside much literary output.

Indeed India is fascinating soil – scratch any seedling and outer software reveals engraved durable (sanâtana) ware. None can perambulate the Purânic ‘forests’ and still remain immune to prodding from deep within towards greater sensitivity to the Laws that govern life.

This is only seeming goat’s nibbling from GJK. This is the sort of starter stuff that could give the run for the honey in quiz and education programs to come, in human society that must shine beyond media-worship and meteoric transience.

Moo over master minds. Madhu vidyâ is around the corner. But do mind the price!

— J.Jayarâman

IN SEARCH OF THE UNITIVE VISION: Letters of Madhav Ashish to an American businessman 1978-1997. 2001. Pub: New Paradigm Books, 22783, South State Rd 7, Suite 97, Boca raton, FL33428, USA. pp292, \$19.95

In Search of the Unitive Vision is the meeting point of two teachers from opposite parts of the globe throwing light on complementary aspects of work on oneself — Gurdjieff, a western teacher of eastern origin and Sri Mâdhava Âshish, an eastern teacher of western origin. The latter was a disciple of Yogi Krishna Prem, known to Ramana ‘world’. It is a record of the efforts of the author Seymour Ginsburg — at whom these 2 forces are directed — at rising above the superficial

conflict of these very contrary forms of teaching by using the very friction to reconcile them into a whole which he terms ‘unitive vision’.

The author’s meeting with Âshish at Mirtola brings Gurdjieff into his life as a teacher and Âshish becomes his guide during the subsequent years. The book is largely structured around their correspondences, in the form of questions and a deluge of doubts that flood Seymour’s mind which are dispelled by Âshish with precise psychological pointers back to himself. Often, these answers take the form of instructions and methods to practise. The very questions indicate the struggles and constant efforts of the author at assimilating his group work in the context of a constant scrutiny and analysis by Âshish. And it is precisely this aspect that constitutes the highlight of this book —it is as much about methods of serious practice as an expression of the underlying philosophy that forms its basis. Unlike most books classified as ‘spiritual/religious literature’ that are either too emotive or disproportionately intellectual in expression, this book strikes the right balance between both these components which are an inseparable part of any real seeking. Although there are a couple of flowing essays written by Âshish in his impeccable English, they do not carry the immediacy of the letters —they talk abstract philosophy ‘to one’ rather than ‘to me’. This leaves one [*sic!*] wondering whether, Seymour gets more from Âshish than Âshish gives... And yet on the other hand, the author probably receives more of Gurdjieff, because he sees him through the eyes of Âshish, a vaishnavite Indian monk who classes Gurdjieff with Krishna and other sacred individuals like Buddha and Christ. G was a profoundly religious man and replacing religion with mere psychological exercises on oneself, as is the fashion in many G groups in the west, is like throwing out the juice and chewing the bagasse. Therefore, Seymour, ‘an

American businessman' as he keeps reminding us, due to the rich influence of Āshish's being, seems to sense the magic, mystery of Gurdjieff's religion —the *rasa* that is the consequence of the Faith, Love and Hope that emanate from hard inner work. And in that, there is also a complementary message for the easterner —the need for a group oriented rigorous 'clean-up work' cannot be substituted by mere philosophy or formal religion. At first glance, G evidently left behind varied bits and pieces: the theoretical part of his teachings, the sacred dances, music, groups, Beelzebub's tales... but at a deeper level the purpose of his life was to create a "legominism" —something created by the genuine efforts of sacred individuals which includes and transcends art, science, religion, and remains from generation to generation in our collective consciousness.

And all that he left behind are indeed part of that legominism. The value of this book over and above any detail is that it carries an esoteric sense of that legominism which is characteristic of Gurdjieff's own writing and often missing in other G literature.

The heart of esotericism is the heart. Those who have got the Gurdjieff cult from the 'groups' imagine that being secretive is being esoteric. We who have known Bhagavān know that the echo of the heart is not verbalisable. And yet, within the limited means at his disposal, Seymour Ginsburg, in writing this book disregards any requirements for secrecy imposed by the 'groups'. By wandering and searching in the spirit of Gurdjieff's own life, he reaches out to the essence of Gurdjieff —"Take the understanding of the east and the knowledge of the west and then seek".

— Anurādhā

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION: Purnima Zweers (with a foreword by Sw. Chidananda). 2002. Pub: Indica Books, D40/18, Godowlia, Varanasi, 221001, UP, India. pp224, Rs225.

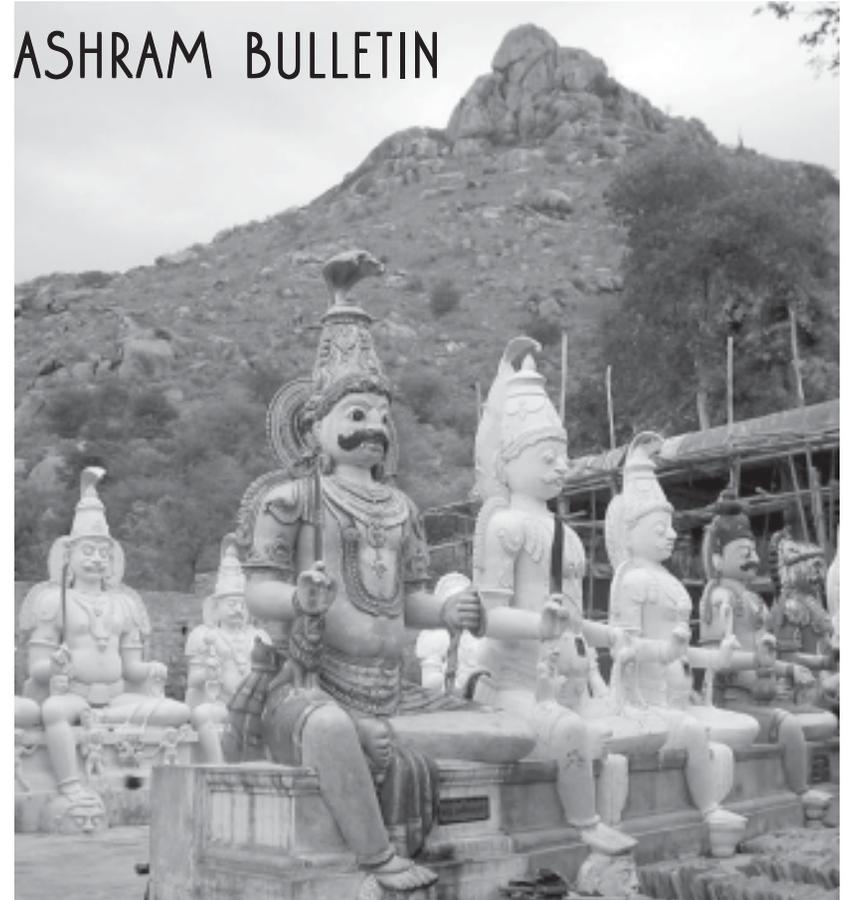
Spiritual Education is meant for parents, teachers, and all who are interested in education based on spiritual values. Included here are the views of Sivānanda, Aurobindo, Krishnamūrti, Amrtānanda Mayī and other saints, on education. Also covered are practical examples using mandalas, meditation, various yoga paths and story-telling as aids. The author describes in detail, schools in the West as well as in the East based on spiritual ideals.

The author, a trained social worker and teacher from Holland, is clearly a bee seeking the universal *rasa* in the flower of the India that lies 'hidden' within India. She is therefore seriously concerned with the quality of the life-choices that await the children of the globalizing village, that is our world. A pillage really, I am tempted to add, of a world which is increasingly sought to be driven by obsessively materialistic patch-work 'solutions' that are historically based on a sort of desperate denial by powers blinded by power. The denial is of the needs of the dominantly non-material levels that define being human and that constitute the myth and culture of human communities. It is a denial as well of the rights of the non-material levels of the vast silent non-self that each divided one of us finds surrounded by. A non-self which is patient only because it is never separable and therefore commands our very survival as ego. Can ecology continue to remain a handmaiden of suave but predatory economic interest and cultural denigration? Things are coming to a head. Trans-national economy is no longer economic if not seen to operate as a subset of ecology and servant to pluralistic culture. A re-assertion, of all that is valuable in human culture, initially through the bottom-line of huge forces of economic rebalancing is clearly on the anvil.

Can the ātman avoid itself as the ātman of the universe?

— J.Jayarāman

ASHRAM BULLETIN



54th Aradhana at Ashram

The 54th Aradhana of Sri Bhagavan was observed on April 17th. On the previous day there was a concert by Smt Ambika Kameswar. Devotees participated in large numbers in the special parayana of Sri Bhagavan's works early that morning. Mahanyasa Rudrabhishekam and puja were performed. Feeding of the poor was done on a large scale and devotees were treated to special lunch after the Maha Arati.

Maha Puja

Mother Alagamma's Aradhana was observed on 11th June. Abhishekam, decoration and puja were performed according to tradition at the Matrubhuteswara temple which houses the samadhi of Sri Bhagavan's mother. Smt Sulochana Natarajan and Dr Sarada gave a concert that evening. Devotees participated in the observances and partook of the blessings of Sri Bhagavan and his mother.

Pachiamman Temple

Pachiamman Koil is the temple situated on the north-eastern side of the mountain. When Lord Shiva sent his consort Parashakti to Tiruvannamalai, it was on this spot she did her penance. Later, in the Chola period (9th century), a small granite edifice was constructed to enshrine the holy site. In 1904 the structure was expanded. During the epidemic of 1905 Sri Bhagavan stayed 6 months and again for 3 months in 1908 with Ganapathi Muni and other devotees. The year 2004 brings a needed renovation, which is in part sponsored by Sri Ramanashram. Additions include an extended temple complex, renovated thirnam, and a new route from the pradakshina road giving easy access to pilgrims doing girivalam. Mahakumbabishekam celebration is Sunday morning, June 27th, with Ganapati homa and four yagasala pujas the days preceding.

Forest Fires

Forest fires on Arunachala hill pose a serious threat to reforestation efforts. The project launched by the Tiruvannamalai Greening Society a few years ago has in part been thwarted by fires which have destroyed a number of newly planted saplings.

Fires that raged in March were the handiwork of people who harvest *manjam pul* or lemon grass which grows on the hill. Farmers sometimes burn the area after harvesting in order to enhance future crop growth.

Fire watchers have been appointed by the society and the Forest

department is providing training. The society plans to replace burnt saplings.

The greening project hopes to get sponsoring for memorial plots, rest parks, sacred groves, a herbal theme park and newly planted avenue trees. It remains to be seen how successful these efforts will be. The reforestation programme will hopefully be sustained and supported. Organizations in other countries have done successful reforestation by taking up dynamic programmes which incorporate new techniques and technologies. Successful reforestation can bring a cooling of the atmosphere and, of course, more rain. It would be better if the experiences of those countries could be adapted here. This calls for concerted effort on the part of the central and state governments and various commercial and non-commercial organizations.

Let It Rain!

And rain it did! May saw an abundance of unseasonal rainfall with daily downpours the first ten days of the month. The storm of May 10th conveyed such a quantity run-off that the conduit at the rear of the Ashram broke bank and sent a fast moving stream toward Bhagavan's samadhi hall. At evening puja after the storm, devotees had the novel experience of having Bhagavan's darshan in 3 inches of rainwater! Fortunately the Ashram sustained no permanent damage from the flood, though lamentably moisture from a storm three days earlier wrought irreparable damage to the life-size

photo portrait of Sri Bhagavan that stood at the south wall of the samadhi hall. Efforts for a replacement are in progress. In return holy tanks along the pradakshina road long since dry are now full again, not least of all Pali Tirtham whose Ashram-sponsored renovation was only recently completed. Owing to its new perimeter walls, this holy tank has filled to an unprecedented level. Arunachala is green, the summer nights cool, and the many lakes and reservoirs that dot the local landscape are happily full.

Obituaries

Bhavana Krishnamoorthy



Known for her uncommon intellect, from first standard Kumari Bhavana Krishnamoorthy was top of her class. A gold-medalist at University she completed an M.Phil at Jawahar Nehru University and served as a lecturer at Delhi University. She was a columnist for *Madras Musings* and did editing work for Penguin Books. Two years ago, after an extensive application process, Bhavana was the only applicant in Asia and Africa to be awarded full scholarship to the

prestigious *School of Oriental and African Studies* at London University, UK. There she wrote her doctoral dissertation (soon to be published) in comparative religion and the Tamil Siddhas. Bhavana was an accomplished Bharatanatyam artiste and had a passion for outdoor life and love for nature. Rafting, paragliding and mountaineering were among her other interests and once, having summited the 5500m Himalayan peak of Kala Patar, she was publicly commended by Chief Minister Dr. Jayalalitha. Recognized for her vibrant spirit and selfless, helping nature, Bhavana was loved by professors, students and all who knew her. On the 30th of April this year, at the tender age of 29, this devoted daughter of Sri Bhagavan and Arunachaleswara merged with Him.

Devdas Keeni



Born in Udupi Kalyanpur, Devdas Keeni came to Bhagavan in the early 1980's and was captivated by the power of Arunachala. He began an epic series of pradakshinas which exemplified his determination and sheer grit. He was a self-made man who

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

stretched himself through self-education and dedication, enabling him to work his way up to the senior management of Hindustan Motors Calcutta. After retirement he settled in Tiruvannamalai. In his later years he suffered a series of illnesses but this did not deter his strength of resolve. He was a person of great charm and intelligence and was loved by all. Whatever the circumstances he had a smile for everyone. A week before his death he was seen going around the hill distributing food to people along the pradakshina path. On March 13 he breathed his last next to his beloved Arunachala.

Sri Behari Lal



Sri Behari Lal, a long time devotee of Bhagavan and resident of Tiruvannamalai, passed away April 20th. Born in Delhi in 1920, "Lal" as he was known among friends and devotees, studied economics at London University. He taught at the London School of Economics for some 30 years. On retirement, he lived near the Ashram and did volunteer teaching at

the local Ramana Maharshi Matriculation School. Even at 84 years old, he was faithful in his 3am daily giripradashina. Given his love for girivalam and the hill, it is fitting that his last moments of conscious earthly life took place while on the pradakshina road. Devotees will miss his quiet gentle presence. May he be absorbed forever at the feet of Holy Arunachala.

S. Sankaranarayanan

S. Sankaranarayanan the well-known Sanskrit scholar attained samadhi on the 12th May in Chennai. He was 79. He was a genuine tapasvin and acknowledged expert on Sri Vidya. It is said that Kapali Sastri's intellectual legacy was two-fold: scholarship of Sri Aurobindo which he passed on to M.P. Pandit, and his understanding and insight into the works of Ganapati Muni which he imparted to Sankaranarayan. He was distinguished for his erudition and depth of understanding. He remained active to the end of his life and recently remarked that he was praying to the Lord for a few more years to translate *Uma Sahasram*. It was not to be. He had however recently completed a comprehensive translation with commentary of Ganapati Muni's *Sri Ramana Catvarimsat* published by Sri Ramanasramam. We are saddened by his loss.

In a forthcoming issue of the Mountain Path, we intend to publish a special article commemorating the life and work of this great scholar.

— Editor.

