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Ramana Ashtottaram

28. *Om Susandrusē namaha.*

Prostration to the One with clear, auspicious vision.

He sees only the noumenon, the reality, behind the multitudinous, phenomenal world.

Bhagavan taught to those who were mature the doctrine of *ajata vada*, the highest principle of Advaita Vedanta. It is the truth that is beyond mental conception.

It is the jnani's experience that nothing comes into existence or ceases to be because the Self alone exists as the unchanging reality. The world is real only when it is seen to be nothing but the nameless and formless Self and not when it is seen as an appearance. Just as the snake is real only when it is seen to be nothing but the rope so long as the appearance of the snake is seen, the rope is not seen. Similarly, so long as the appearance of the world is seen, the Self, which is the reality underlying it, is not seen.

29. *Om Savitrē namaha.*

Prostration to the One who is the Sun of Awareness, *jnana bhānu*.

The jnani is Self, which does not create, behold or reveal the world. "Though Self itself is seen as the world of many names and forms, it is not the doer that acts as the cause which creates, sustains and destroys the world." (*Guru Vachaka Kovai* v. 85) The world is created, revealed and seen only by the mind, which is a reflection of the pure light of Self, in whose effulgence the mind and the whole world-appearance is swallowed. The jnani naturally and without effort reveals the light of *jnana*, true knowledge, because he himself is that self-shining light.

Whenever a seeker was unable to comprehend the principle of *ajata vada*, Bhagavan would teach the next step down that the world comes into existence simultaneously with the appearance of the I-thought and that it ceases to exist when the I-thought is absent. This is called *drishhti-srishhti vada*. ▲

EDITORIAL

Instant Culture

Dissatisfaction with our world and our culture has become endemic throughout the world. Why else would people come searching for alternatives, why indeed would people look for spiritual sustenance if they were contented with the world they live in? Although this type of discontent is rife, the reason for it is sometimes not very clear. As individuals, we know that something is wrong, but we are becoming more and more indoctrinated by a culture that is trying to erase individuality. Individuality gets in the way of the 'system'.

There are innumerable reasons why people are attracted to Bhagavan's teachings but the underlying thread is suffering generated by alienation from society due either to emotional, spiritual or economic causes. Some may be attracted for purely intellectual reasons, as Bhagavan's teachings are so clear. Personal reasons are innumerable and unique to each individual, and so do not concern us in this essay.

The social consequence of the new world economy is a new phenomenon whereby people are valued not as human beings but as economic units. The proficient use of factories has dramatically

increased the type and range of goods available that make our lives more comfortable. There are better medical facilities and superior forms of communication and transportation. People live longer and are physically more secure. However, all this superior organization has come at a cost, the price of which we are only just beginning to calculate.

People are now increasingly seen as machines that generate products that create profits and with these profits, power for those who through their ingenuity and good luck have managed to become dominant in the enviable echelons of society. These products are not only material, they can also be services as we see particularly in Western countries where economies are becoming service oriented. The arts and culture in general have also become services, which provide entertainment when workers are free of their duties. Thus instead of being expressions of the live rhythms of society the arts have instead become mere entertainment, with little nourishment for the spirit.

The person who works in a production line spends the day replicating the same function until it becomes a mindless activity. The owners of the assembly line are saying, in effect, 'You are an extension of the machine'. Similarly, the people who work behind the counters at fast food restaurants or punching information for railway tickets on computers or dealing with complaints from irate citizens whose telephones do not function, are not permitted to work using their full capabilities. This is because people who try to be creative can disrupt the process. From the point of view of the system, they are more likely to mess things up. One of the irrationalities of a rationalised organizational system is that the system — a non-living thing — takes priority over living beings such as workers and consumers. Consumers too become workers because without them the current economic system would collapse.

In short, we see a trend to cut out the individual in the consumer culture at large. The culture works to eliminate genuine human interaction, because interactions are unpredictable and eat up valuable time, which could be spent making more profits. We are left with either no interaction at all, such as ATMs or with false communication such as say, rules in fast food centres where workers, as part of their

job, are required to smile at all times. We have been sold the idea of total conformity and it takes a shrewd mind to spot that what we have bought is total blandness and mediocrity. Worst of all, we have arrived at this state without even realising it. Even ordinary speech in our so-called free society has its designated conventional rules; rules which we are more or less obliged to abide by due to what is called political correctness.

One of the central trends of modern western culture and in particular American culture, is towards the loss of the sense of the sacred. Life is less and less a journey to be savoured, both the good and the bad, and more something to speed through as quickly as possible. Meals are turned into acts of consumption rather than a joyful sharing and the splendour of ancient forests is converted into wood chips for plywood planks and toilet paper.

The German sociologist Max Weber called this the 'disenchantment of the world'. In a world dominated by a rationalised culture, the magic, the mystery, the religious qualities of the world are called into question and subtly decried as being irrelevant and childish. Our sciences and our bureaucratic organizations are systematically stripping the natural world of its magical properties and its capacity for meaning, and in turn, we are stripped of our capacity to perceive this magic and meaning in our everyday life. In a perfect world of modern industrialised consumer life, we are machines whose function it is to consume the products made for our benefit. If we are not aware of these benefits, the bright minds in the advertising industry will soon make us feel we are sadly lacking if we don't have their new and indispensable product; very often we are coaxed into desiring something that we didn't even know existed a few minutes ago.

As the whole planet becomes more computerised it is also *ipso facto* becoming insidiously more conformist. In the so-called 'first world' everyone is filed into computer slots: there is no room for square pegs in round holes. Those days are long gone as it is now mandatory for general convenience that everyone fits into a designated niche and every detail about them is accessible at the touch of a button. Our whole world is being programmed for uniformity, convenience and speed.

There is no obvious villain in this case, most of us just accept the rules of the world we live in and become so unaware of the constraints imposed upon us that we no longer notice them. In fact most of us now cannot manage without instant communication by email; instant clothes off the rack; instant food either from a fast food outlet or from a jar of pre-prepared stuff. We take all of this so much for granted as part of our everyday lives, that we now also look for instant self-realisation! Some people come to the ashram with an agenda and a time limit and they want results by the clock! Sadly, although their desire for enlightenment is genuine, their assumption that it can be attained by them or conferred on them to a set agenda shows a complete lack of understanding of Bhagavan and his teachings and also what self-realisation really means.

We see this phenomenon in the spiritual world today both here in India and abroad. Various organizations have sprung up to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge of Hindu culture and spiritual teachings. They have done an admirable job making people aware of the depths and splendour of the Santana Dharma. Many of these organizations now have branches all over the world to instruct non-resident Indians as well as newcomers to the dharma. In the west, indigenous groups have independently sprung up, teaching their own versions of the dharma, some with more success than others.

Unfortunately in some groups, often headed by charismatic leaders who claim 'realisation', students are told that they too will receive the transmission if certain specified qualifications are fulfilled. That is, they do as they are told. We can only speak generally here for there are those who are genuine and whose yogic and Vedantic practices are legitimate.

In the same way, that the modern social and economic world has the tendency to be rationalised there is the danger in spiritual circles that teachings are being homogenised like a factory assembly line. Students are promised that at the end of a specific course or set of teachings they will gain some kind of enlightenment. If they surrender and give up to the organisation some or all of their worldly goods, they are well on the way to being accepted and therefore qualified to

receive the secret teachings. We therefore read in spiritual magazines about people who are 'realised' and are told that if we would just step forward, we too have the chance to become 'realised'. It seems all so easy. As in a fast food restaurant, all we need do is line up, pay our dues and the fabulous product is in our hands. It sounds enticing and is compelling for many who are confused and in search of a magic elixir to cure their suffering and resolve their doubts; particularly as it is all laid out in the 'instant' idiom with which they are familiar.

There is the notion that spiritual truth can be institutionalised and that it can be the exclusive preserve of an individual who claims some magical copyright. If we believe that, we are at the mercy of this so-called higher being who dispenses the truth at, more often than not, their own whim. We should exercise discrimination when enticed by offers of a quick cure for our emotional, mental and spiritual ills.

Let us be very clear, spirituality is not the exclusive domain of an individual or a specific religion. We are all equally qualified to receive the teachings that will free us from the cycle of life and death. Sincerity is the sole qualification which determines whether we discover the right teacher to remove our ignorance. The Sanskrit word *sraddha* can be variously translated as faith, sincerity, and duty. As Jesus Christ would say: 'Knock and it shall be open to you.' But first we have to knock.

Sri Ramana Maharshi was quite precise about the dissemination of spiritual teachings on a one to one basis.

In 1936 when Paramahansa Yogananda visited the ashram, he asked Bhagavan:

'How is the spiritual uplift of the people to be effected? What are the instructions to be given to them?'

Bhagavan replied: 'They differ according to the temperaments of the individuals and according to the spiritual ripeness of their minds. There cannot be any instruction *en masse*.' (Talk 107.)

In the face of these alarming challenges, what are we to do if our integrity as individuals is to remain intact? How are we to manage our lives and not fall into this mediocrity? How can we live, feed and clothe ourselves and our families without compromising our principles?

There are no easy answers here and each of us has to discover what is appropriate to take care of our body, heart and mind.

Bhagavan taught that we are not the body. This means that we should not confuse our true identity with the body. Jesus Christ put it very well when the Pharisees who asked if it was lawful to pay tribute (taxes). He looked at a coin which displayed an image of the emperor, and said; 'Render therefore unto to Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.' (Matthew 22:21.)

In that context, our bodies belong to Caesar and as they are the corporeal container in which we live, we should take some care of them. Bhagavan himself was a notable cook and for many years he enjoyed helping in the kitchen. He demonstrated by his own life how it was possible to live in accord with the world around him without imposing on others or in turn, allowing others to meddle with his life and its purpose.

We are all confronted everyday with the dilemma of how to reconcile the demands of the world with our inner spiritual needs. If we remember the basic principle of being true to ourselves whatever the cost and if we adhere to the principle not to deliberately hurt others, we can find a way which does not damage our integrity and sense of worth. Bhagavan tirelessly stressed the paramount importance of using our life to find out who we are. He gave us the priceless gift of the teaching 'Who am I?' for that purpose. If we do remain true to this teaching then its sheer simplicity will guide us. Our individuality will not be crushed, the flood of desires and demands of consumerism will not swamp us and we will be able to tread the path, however slowly, in the knowledge that grace is ever available. ▲

Reality and Relativity

V. DWARAKNATH REDDY

Scientists, scholars and spiritual seekers: I feel blessed that I can be a part of this significant event and share with this elite and focussed gathering the strivings of my soul to know the truth of itself, to divine its origins if possible, so that its charted passage so far could serve to define its ultimate destination. I have chosen to title this deliberation as Reality and relativity.

In the relative frame of mentation, we can acquire knowledge only within the circle of inescapable duality, of category, quality and quantity. This is the linear voyage. Yet we know that the longest list of the largest numbers will not add up to infinity. The rationale of numbers projects to our minds a concept of infinity, but infinity is not the contiguous last point of an extended line. Thus our mind assumes familiarity with both Reality and relativity, but the mind which is a

The present article is a transcription of a talk given by the author at the All-India Conference of World Association for Vedic Studies (WAVES) held in Bangalore in January 2005. Other books by the author include *Physics of Karma* and *Dicey Problem of New-Age Science*. Interested readers can meet him at Sri Ramanasramam for interaction.

native of relativity has no visa to visit Reality. Reality is not a step toward, it is Transcendence.

Human intelligence cannot rest till it knows what now remains unknown. It has marched a long way and knows that there are yet miles to go through the dark woods. Man is asking total questions and so the demand is for ultimate answers. What is creation? Why is it the way it is? What is its future? This deep probe into the basic nature of things and events is the essence of pure science. Physics studies the workings of energy on matter and measures the resultant changes. Chemistry deals with the composition and structure of matter and the interactions and reactions therein. Mathematics formulates the findings of both in the precise and succinct language of numbers, and states them in concise equations.

The world, I, and God

Who is asking questions, and formulating answers? *I am*. Who has the need to know? *I have*. There are three entities, no more and no less. The world, I, and God. This God is a word, a concept, a postulate — but necessary to complete the cosmic enquiry, because creation inevitably brings up the reference to a creator. When finally resolved, the word God may change to Absolute, or to Reality, or even to Unified Theory of Everything. The point is this: the created world of matter asks no questions and needs no answers; *God* should have no problems, and in any case is not asking questions. It is I, this person somewhere in-between the two, with the gift or curse of a mind. Mind is the conscious faculty that makes me *more* than matter but *less* than God, and this mind is posing the questions and is restless for answers.

Every thought arises as a nascent whisper of sound within me, and is shaped by the words that constitute my language. I have lived and learnt and communicated with these words always and these same words must now carry me to the new frontiers I dare to explore. And of these words, time, space and causation are the irreducible datum that circumscribes every event. Any happening is in space at some time and due to some cause. Where, when, and why or how are the questions

that are always involved. All this seems to be *out there*, but the knowledge of it, the perception and the formulation is *in here*, in me. In my vocabulary the orbiting worlds are dead, while I am alive. What makes the difference?

Let us ask the physicist

I go to the physicist. “Sir, what is the reality you are looking for?” He says: “We want to know how the cosmos began and how it is evolving. We want to know why the world is just this way.” I ask: “Sir, how will you find out.” He says: “We know that all the matter of the universe was condensed into a small sphere. We call it the black hole, because at that density not even light could escape its gravitational hold. Then it exploded in what we call the Big Bang. The expansion since then is being measured and charted. But we are clueless as to what happened in the first 1/10,000th of a second. What triggered the Big Bang and how? If we knew that, we could unravel the whole of creation.” “Sir,” I ask, “When did the Big Bang happen?”

The physicist says: “The question is inadmissible. Time starts at the Big Bang, which is a *singularity*. There is no prior event at this horizon, so there is no prior time.” “Sir, why do you need the time-factor at all?” He says: “We study the play of cosmic forces like gravity, electricity and radiation on matter. We need time to measure velocity and acceleration.”

I am beginning to feel isolated. I feel let down. Time has personal connotations for me. I feel the subjective need for memory in order to be the person that I am, to preserve my personal identity — and this memory needs time to establish continuity. The consciousness in me is what confirms to me the existence of the universe. The relevance of scientific enquiry has its focus in me. My watch ticks with mechanical precision but the watch has no need to know the time. I wear the watch so that I may know the time. I have a purpose. There is no purpose in the material frame.

More recently, physics, moving beyond Newton’s determinations into quantum uncertainty, has included an ‘observer’ in the equations for the observed. The word ‘observer’ in the language of common

usage has implied reference to a conscious entity, and leads to an erroneous assumption. In truth, the physicist's observer is a machine, not a human. The physicist does not talk of life or of consciousness. Agreed he deals only with dead matter and dead energies. If consciousness was only about feeling, about pain, emotion, or muscular response, physics could disclaim any involvement with it. But as time (unlike matter) is a concept and as concepts are the exclusive domain of consciousness, how can physics distance itself from the enquiry into consciousness? Time will catch up with the physicist!

Let us ask the bio-scientist

Sadly, but hopefully, I turn to the other discipline of scientific investigation, chemistry. I seek out the bio-scientist and ask him: "Sir, you, unlike your brother physicist, deal with live organisms. The insignia of evolved life is consciousness. Where is the beginning of consciousness? Where does it arise?" And the bio-scientist says to me: "Consciousness arises from brain-cells. The great wonder of creative evolution, called the brain, has billions of nerve-cells or neurons, with axons and fine fibres called dendrites. Nerves are joined by synapses where chemicals are released and act as triggers. Signals are passed between neurons as electrical impulses, carried by the nervous system, creating recognition and, response." I am staggered by the reach of science. The physicist with the *telescope* views the expanding universe and the chemist with the *microscope* views the minute cell. But my question is about some '*I-scope*' in my mind, without which nothing can be viewed. I complain to you about tooth-ache and you say you will talk to the tooth about it, but not to me. I am being ignored. I am alive, I am conscious, and I want to know how I am fitted into your scheme of matter. So, like a petulant pestering boy, I continue with my line of questioning.

"Sir," I ask the bio-scientist, "neurons or proteins are made up of atoms or molecules. Like bone, blood, muscle or hair, the brain is also structured out of matter, and matter is insentient, inert. What exudes or effervesces out of matter has also to be insentient and inert. Honestly, it is dead matter. But you are insisting that dead matter produces 'life'.



I consider myself a sentient being because I am aware of myself to start with, and therefore aware of you, it, and the world, and I perceive and respond. Matter cannot do that. So where does this conscious energy enter my material body-frame?"

He replies: "The special arrangement of molecules in the brain and the nervous system makes it possible. Everything is molecular, and the key to the complex web of the secret of life is our recent discovery of DNA. On this new frontier Nature will be overtaken by science. Your god has lost the race."

The conversation has ended. My question has been evaded, not answered. Whatever is a product of matter must be material too. Are we to understand that life is only a word that refers to 'dead' phenomena? Darwin reportedly asked in his Note-Books, "What is so unusual about consciousness? As sweat oozes out of the skin, so does consciousness ooze out of the brain." If that is right, *death is the true face of creation and life a mask laid falsely upon it*. Fortunately, that is not right.

Amongst the energies known to science are gravity and electricity. They are eternal. They exist forever, and everywhere, as unmanifest potential forces. Only when aligned with matched equipment do they manifest. Electricity is light in the bulb, the motion in the fan, and sound in this mike. If a bulb is broken, that bit of electricity does not die. When TV or the computer was invented, electricity did not have to 'evolve' to learn a new mode of manifestation. *There is no evolution of energy; there is only evolution of equipments*.

Gravity does not exist in isolated areas. Science talks of gravitational field and electro-magnetic field. Matter itself is a concretised area within the field of gravitational energy. $E=mc^2$ is not read as 'All is matter'. We read it as 'All is energy.' Even seen as equals, one emerges as more equal!

My life, in my personally validated terms, is a movement, experienced as a flow of thoughts. I am perceiving, feeling, deciding and reacting. My material body is functioning because energy is acting on it, and that energy is consciousness.

The science of life, which we may call philosophy, accepts the rationale of the material sciences about energies, and says that consciousness is for ever (like gravity), and unchanging. But a great

distinction has to be emphasized. Gravity, electricity and all other observed forces are insentient, for they do not know themselves or each other. Consciousness is unique in that its very nature is 'knowing', 'being aware', and so it must be conceded that consciousness is an energy that knows itself, and knows all other energies. It remains eternally self-confirmed and all knowledge of the cosmos stands validated in the centre where consciousness is manifesting as 'I AM'. My own assertion of being and knowing is clearly focussed upon my body-frame, but again the question arises:

"Is this assemblage of material molecules or organs generating and expressing the life in it — life that is experienced psychologically, but which is a deeper reality than the physiological — or is it an independent faculty of life called consciousness that is manifesting through this body-equipment, turning these 60 kilos of dead matter into a live person?"

The Great Divide between Mind and Matter

Herein lies the Great Divide, the insurmountable Great Wall of China that sets science and philosophy apart. *Time* becomes the Achilles' heel of physics, and *mind* the Achilles' heel of chemistry, Redemption lies in the truth of consciousness. Another great sage of our times, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, has stated it in clear terms. He says:

"Look at the mind as a function of matter and you have science.

Look at matter as the product of the mind and you have religion."

Let us drop the labels of scientist or sage, science or religion, and be involved together in one thrust of enquiry to understand the ultimate unitary Reality. Einstein's profound insights or instincts yielded the Theory of Relativity. Aptly it had to be the theory of *relativity*, it could not have been the theory of *reality*, for how shall we capture Reality in our equations?

Einstein displayed honesty and modesty when he told his scientific fraternity: "As long as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as long as they are certain, they do not refer to reality." By the same token of honesty, let us not bend backwards in the name of catholicity and compromise. There is no need for it and no sense in it. Forcing a square peg into a round hole helps no one. Truth is an

uncompromising master, otherwise it would be untrue to itself and that is impossible. A quotation etched on our credibility declares: “Science without religion is blind; religion without science is lame.” This seemingly noble edict voiced by a well-meaning Einstein amounts to nothing tangible. It suggests that together they can reach finality. But please visualize their joint venture: Trying to move alone, both will fall into their individual ditches. Joining forces or talents, and lame religion riding piggy-back on blind science, both will now fall into a common ditch. Let them take their choice, but what comfort is it to us? The sole question to be resolved refers to consciousness. Let the scientific fraternity in its wisdom and integrity face this challenge.

Darwinian evolution

Let us look at the Darwinian concept of evolution. Body-forms have changed over the millennia. Each species has struggled for survival, and that struggle has brought about minute changes, or major mutations, in cell-structures. These changes have been transmitted to the off-spring, because reproduction has for its base the transfer of sperm to ova, which means of matter to matter. Thus, evolution is the history of progressive material complexity, carefully researched and documented by Darwin.

Now suppose a thesis is argued on the evolution of the wheel, on which, literally, civilization has rolled across time. From the cart-wheel to the cycle, to the car, to the landing gear of the jet plane, has been the developing story of the evolution of the wheel evolved, but the wheel itself has had no gain, no benefit, no joy in the process. The profit and fulfilment belongs to the demanding human race. The purpose for its evolution lay in the need of humanity for better transport — without the continuity of this purpose, there would have been no continuity of its evolution. Regretfully, science knows a lot about the *content* of creation, but knows nothing about the *intent* of creation. Content is in matter. Intent is in consciousness.

Similarly, with the evolution of species, if consciousness is coeval and co-terminal with the body of the individual, there can be no continuity of an experiencer beyond a single lifespan. One generation

struggles, suffers, endures, and brings about progress. It earns the means for a better life, but dies at that point. This is a case of unpaid wages. A later generation, without even saying “Thank you, grandpa” inherits these advantages. This is a case of unearned income. Is this the benevolence of providence, or perverted justice in creation?

Again, if this is the ordained scheme of creation, it seems bizarre that a mighty majestic epic is unfolded over an eternity of time, but man, the proclaimed pinnacle of evolutionary excellence, is permitted no more than *one* brief glimpse for *one* moment of a life-bubble, and is blanked out. Dumb time and mute chance are the eternal witnesses but not a continuing consciousness. This is what the sage identified as ‘looking at mind as a function of matter’.

My laboratory for studying consciousness-in-itself has to be *myself*. That is sufficient. I exist aware of my existence. I know the world I live in; that is my objective knowledge. That is my state of wakefulness.

The dream state in consciousness

But I occasionally experience another state of consciousness, the dream state. All of us know what that means, otherwise we cannot share the meaning. It would be like explaining light to one born blind. Try it. In my dream this 60 kg body of mine was not a participant. But no one is bodiless in his or her dream. Also all the physical and sensory functions are totally intact. In my dream there are many others, and a town, and a beach. All of it is as real to my dreaming consciousness as any situation or scene is to me when I am awake. Later, on waking up, I say I had a dream and narrate what happened. I tell you that it happened to me. My continuity through the two *planes* of consciousness is asserted from personal experience, not by deduction or hear-say. The *relative reality* of the two states is later categorized, but the *continuing identity* of the I-person is not doubted.

The deep sleep state in consciousness

The deep-sleep state takes the enquiry into consciousness much farther. Deep-sleep, by definition, would have to be a thoughtless state. Flow of thought is mental activity and signifies wakefulness and awareness. I, as

a person cease to be in deep sleep. “I fell fast asleep. I knew nothing” is your quote and mine. This is said by us on waking up, not sensed by us while in deep sleep. The continuing identity of the same I-person is not questioned. Without the physical body, without even the subtle mental-body, where was this “I”? He surely was, for he returned. Thought is to Total Consciousness what a wave is to the ocean. Flow of thoughts is what we call ‘the mind’. Total consciousness manifests as individualized mind through one brain, just as Total Electricity manifests as light through one bulb. When switched off, electricity goes into the unmanifest mode. And the room goes into darkness. Deep sleep is the switching off, when the relative consciousness becomes unmanifest and the person knows nothing. “I knew nothing” he says. You and I have said it. But the *I-ness*, the insignia of consciousness, has continued through waking, dream, and deep-sleep states. The brain was not essential for the *existence* of consciousness, it was only essential *for its manifestation* as the mind. The switched off bulb will light up again. The sleeping man will wake up. But when the bulb has fused it cannot be lit again. That is death. The body dies when the contact with the consciousness-current is destroyed, when the circuit is broken permanently. The bulb goes into the dust-bin; survivors take the corpse to the graveyard or the crematorium.

Total Consciousness is seamless, shoreless. Is it not my mind that knows time and space? Time and space are *contents* of my consciousness. How then can they be the *container* of my consciousness? If my brain-matter is producing consciousness, then of course *I am in time*, but if in reality the reverse is true, then *time is in me*. It means that I am coeval with time. I am as eternal as time is. Bodies are born, grow and die but the Consciousness that is reflected in the experiencer, the ego or the psyche or the I-ness of the individual cannot cease to be. Death is only a changed state of consciousness. An anonymous poem says it perfectly:

Do not stand at my grave, and cry.
I am not there; I did not die.

Creation resolves itself into Total Consciousness

Let science, shackled hand and foot to matter, move to this perspective. It is still only a beginning, but it is the path beyond the great divide.



Objective knowledge would have begun to concede a subjective reality to the knower of objectivity. In one corner of a canvas with a scenic painting, there is the picture of the painter shown seated at his easel painting the picture. You are asked “Who painted this picture?” and you show me the area of the canvas which contains *the picture of the painter!* Is that a sufficient answer? That, at best, is the ‘observer’ of physics. All of it is in the same frame and the frame is relativity. Great physicists have conceded that they are looking at nothing but a set of highly abstract differential equations; that they are looking not at reality itself but at mathematical *symbols of reality*. Schroedinger, Broglie, Sir James Jeans, Eddington and Ken Wilber agree that the search for reality by the methods of physical science leads only to a ‘shadow world of symbols’.

All concepts are shaped by pairs of opposites: far and near, big and small, tall and short, rich and poor, hot and cold, beautiful and ugly, honour and dishonour, virtue and sin, life and death. The word ‘relative’ therefore conjures up its opposite: ‘absolute’. But it is only a word in the vocabulary of the relative Mind. Mind’s name is relativity. It cannot touch the Absolute, any more than numbers can touch infinity. Therefore it can now be stated that by freeing our personalized consciousness from the stifling embrace of matter, we do not arrive at Reality. We only arrive at a ‘relative reality.’ However even this is yet a quantum leap from today’s rigid stance of science.

Seers focussed on the study of absolute life, as apart from the study of ‘living forms’ have had to make a distinction and call the individualized or fragmented mentation as ‘reflected consciousness’. Total consciousness remains intact, and is the *unconditioned* Absolute Reality, but assumes a seeming plurality, as *one* can become *many* through multiple reflections. It is this reflected consciousness that we call *the mind* when we limit it through identity with a body-form, just as we might talk of the sun, when seeing its reflection in a pool of water. This is the psyche, loosely called the ‘soul’, or confusedly called ‘the ghost-in-the-machine’.

There is a purpose to life and that is the quest for abiding happiness. Security, status, possessions, sex and fame are providers of happiness.

But there is no satiation. Lasting contentment evades the seeker, simply because the largest number does not exist. A linear function has no destination. The craving is understandable, but the methodology is wrong. It is even self-defeating. The right method can be formulated only when the Absolute and the relative are seen for what they really are. And that means, when Total Consciousness is recognised as distinct from reflected consciousness. This is an attainable goal, because the I-am centre in me is even now, the inheritor of ‘Reality’, but by limiting it to my body-frame I have needlessly fettered myself with the limitations of time, space, and causation. I have reduced the eternal to the temporal, the infinite to the spatial, and the uncaused to the causal.

If this ignorance is corrected, this very same I-centre can experience its Absolute nature, and regain the kingdom which in truth it never lost. The king dreamt he was a beggar and suffered in his dream, but he woke up smiling as the king. This is intuited rationally by the seeker of spiritual reality in the lab of his mind. With confidence and commitment he devised experiments called meditation. He arrived. Unlike physics and chemistry which bring *observed* results, the seer ended in the *experienced* results. That is what makes one a sage. And we have the promise of the sage, in the declaration of the Vedas that Total Consciousness is the Reality, there can be none else.

This is literally true from A to Z, that is, from Advaita to Zen, including Sufism, Christian Mysticism, and Taoism.

Reincarnation, the linear voyage of return from the relative to Reality

We have no time today for that research. Let me complete the more intimate narration of the personalized psyche. One day his body dies. He continues to live in a form and with faculties that are not altogether unfamiliar to him — they had made up the subtle body of his dream experiences when he was alive. The sensed reality of himself this time is much more intense and vivid. His memory-framed desires and formulated joys and sorrows that once defined his life-time continue as the contents of his consciousness. They constitute the causal frame (the *vasanas* or *samskara*) that propels him on his quest to regain his inheritance of bliss (*ananda*). A whole peopled world of

environment exists. Time-scales change. Mobility and sense-perceptions have new parameters, but otherwise it is living and experiencing—it is by its own rights a real world.

As long as the mind believes that its compulsive goal of enduring happiness will be attained through acting, reacting, and relating with the external world of men and matter, it has condemned itself to a relentless pursuit of objectivity. Only the dawn of understanding that a still, silent mind is the acme of achievement, and that such a state of unmanifested potential is the sum and source of all creation, can turn the focus of the mind inward upon itself. Then the paramountcy of Supreme Consciousness will reveal itself. That is Totality, that is Reality.

But till then the voyage of discovery continues. Totality, which we will now call Creative Intelligence, operates strictly as a cause-effect continuum. That is the Law. That is the ultimate frame of determinism, which includes your hazy words of probability and uncertainty also.

Following this cosmic physics, the subtle-body ego-sense must return to a material body-form. Causal correctness determines and decrees the occasion, the environment, and the parentage. If human computers can bring the space-bound cosmonaut back to a pin-point landing, drop your scepticism about the cosmic computer, which is the total consciousness in operation, accurately aligning all causes to all effects and programming “re-birth” with infallible precision. This re-entry of the psyche is called reincarnation because a carnal, fleshy body is again inhabited.

Thus is the continuity of an experiencer, living at various levels and chasing his chosen goals. Let us say then that Man is not the end product of evolution; he did not jump on to the band-wagon driven by chance and Time on the last leg of its journey. *Man is all of evolution.*

My time has run out. I am conscious of it. By now, are we all conscious of consciousness? ▲

KEYWORD

Tapas

Tapas (Skt): austerity; to burn

The term describes the action engaged in by the spiritual seeker to achieve true knowledge. It is often used to describe the action of a yogi who employs a specific meditation practice to gain power or *siddhis*.

The aim of traditional seekers is declared as *Iswara Darshan*, that is, to see God. The actual implication of this aim is to become united with God, which is indicated by the term *yoga* or union. The seekers who do yoga are engaged in *tapas* as prescribed in the Vedas or the later classical Indian scriptures, and are usually guided by a *guru*, a spiritual preceptor.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was exceptional. He did not study any scriptures nor did he require a human preceptor. He spontaneously engaged in *vichara*,¹ and accomplished in minutes what takes other

¹ Refer to *Self-Realization* by B.V. Narasimha Swamy.

seekers a lifetime or more. His teachings are radical because they are based on his unique experiment and experience, *sadhana* and *anubava*. The traditional scriptures give us some limited instructions on *vichara*, but it is Bhagavan's understanding of *vichara* and *tapas* that are fundamentally different from the traditional scriptures, which reveals to us the royal road to self-knowledge.

The fundamental difference of perception of *tapas* can be seen in the text, *Upadesa Saram* or as it is known in Tamil, *Upadesa Undiyar*. The *tapas* performed by the rishis in the forest of Daruka in order to acquire siddhis can only lead to self-aggrandisement and consequent disgrace whereas the right *tapas* brings about the destruction of the ego which is liberation.

Bhagavan deftly composed simple but profound verses² on all the kinds of *tapas* in thirty terse stanzas. In the first fifteen verses, he covers the four types of traditional yoga and in the second half, he instructs us about *vichara*, both the theory and the application.

Muruganar who composed the concluding verse 30 of *Upadesa Undiyar* records Bhagavan's concluding statement on *tapas*:

“What (is experienced) if one knows that which remains after ‘I’ (ego self) has ceased to exist, that alone is excellent *tapas*.” — thus said Lord Ramana, the Self.”³

Though Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni had practised numerous kinds of *tapas* according to the scriptural injunctions, he realised that his understanding was inadequate and requested Bhagavan to explain the true meaning of *tapas*. Bhagavan replied: “If one watches whence the notion ‘I’ arises, the mind is absorbed into That; that is *tapas*. When a mantra is repeated, if one watches the Source from which the mantra sound is produced the mind is absorbed in That; that is *tapas*.”⁴

What is the means recommended by Bhagavan?

“When one investigates the source of ‘I’ within, the ‘I’ will die. This is self enquiry.”⁵

When we seek the source of our ‘I’ there is no definitive ‘place’ where it resides. It is elusive like trying to catch the wind in your hands. It is not a fixed entity that is dependent on time and space as we know it.. So then, how are we to find the source of ‘I’ with our mind when it does not exist in any conventional locality?

Who asks this question? Who is the one who searches for oneself? Bhagavan requests us to remain in the source of that consciousness which asks the question. To turn the attention of the mind within so that it is fixed upon the sense of existence of its source is *tapas*. It is not the thoughts, which reveal the truth; it is the pure consciousness (*chit*) which reveals the truth of being (*sat*).

“There is no other consciousness to know that which exists (the reality or *sat*). Therefore existence (*sat*) is also consciousness (*chit*) and we are that (the real Self).”⁶

Tapas is the abidance in the Self. It is not abidance by the mind in the Self, because that presupposes the mind and the so-called Self are different. Rather, in that pure state of consciousness:

“Being the Self is knowing the Self, because the Self is (one and) not two. This is Self abidance.”⁷ ▲

² *Upadesa Undiyar*: edited by Michael James, first edition, Introduction, Pages 7&8.

³ *Ibid.*, v. 30.

⁴ *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* by A.Osborne p.108. Sri Ramanasramam 2002.

⁵ *Upadesa Undiyar*, v. 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 23.

⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 26.



Ulladu Narpadu

Based on Lakshmana Sharma's
Commentary

Verse Seven

S. RAM MOHAN

7. The world and the intellect (knowledge) arise and set together. It is by awareness (only that) that the world shines. The Reality (therefore) is only that Infinite One which shines uninterruptedly, without rising and setting. It serves as the Substratum, wherein the world and the awareness (of it) have their rising and setting.

Commentary

Here the second sentence summarises the meaning of the previous verse, and hence it must be taken to mean that the world is contained in the intellect (which is only an aspect of the mind). In that case the words 'the world' and 'the awareness', occurring in the second sentence, should be changed to 'the awareness which unfolds itself as the world.' Since the world has no existence apart from the mind, it is sufficient to indicate the Source of the mind.

When the previous verse is read with the present verse, it conveys the teaching that all this, namely the mind and the world (which appears in conjunction with the mind) are unreal. Here the same test

of Reality is applied, as was utilized by Bhagavan when he gave the meaning of the first sentence of the first benedictory verse as, 'If there were not being could there be an idea of being?' The Substratum (*param*), which serves as the place for the rising and setting of the world and the mind, does not itself arise or set. It shines continuously without a break. That *alone* is real. It follows implicitly from this that these two, the mind and the world, are unreal, as they do not shine continuously, but arise and set.

Since the two, the world and the mind, arise and set together, they are not two entities but one indivisible entity. The mind never remains empty, but is always filled with the world-appearance. Neither does the world appear by itself, but only by and with the mind. This suggests that both arise from the outgrowths of one common cause. That common cause is the ego-sense, manifest as 'I'.

The Substratum of this inseparable pair, the world and the mind, is Brahman, the Sole Reality. It is self-shining; that is, it shines by its own Consciousness-Light. It does not shine by some other light. In the case of the world, it shines or exists by the light of another entity, the mind (intellect). Brahman is not the same as the mind, in that it is pure, independent and free from the encumbrance of the world-appearance. Brahman is described as Infinite to show that it is the All, that is, there is nothing else beside it. The conclusion we can draw from this is that the world is unreal because it is dependent on the mind for its existence.

In all the civilizations of the world, Light is the common symbol, which symbolises the Absolute. We can recall the conversation between Janaka and Yajnavalkya in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* where Janaka seeks to know "what is the nature of light?" Yajnavalkya in successive steps tells him, that the light is that of the sun, moon, fire and sound. Janaka is dissatisfied with each answer until finally, Yajnavalkya gives the reply, "The self-luminous being who dwells within the lotus of the heart, surrounded by the senses and sense organs, and who is the light of the intellect, is that Self. Becoming identified with the intellect, he moves to and fro, through birth and death, between this world and the next. Becoming identified with the intellect, the Self appears to be

thinking, appears to be moving. While the mind is dreaming, the Self also appears to be dreaming, and to beyond the next world as well as this."¹

The same concept is explained on *Kathopanishad* II 2-15: "Not there does the sun shine, nor the moon and stars; there lightning shines not; nor does fire shine on it. After Him, as He shines, everything shines: with His light, everything is illuminated."

Though that reality (Brahman) is really nameless and formless, yet it happens that names and forms are ascribed to it. Then it becomes the personal God whom devotees adore. Such adoration serves as a means for them to win, ultimately, the experience of the Real Self. Though it is useful at a certain stage for aspirants, the final goal is not the vision of the personal God (*Ishta Devata*). The final goal is the experience only of the identity of the Real Self and the essential reality of the Personal God, Brahman. This teaching is conveyed in the next verse. ▲

¹ *The Upanishads*. Translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester. p.104. New American Library 1957.



Arunachala: Spiritual Axis of the World

T. V. RAMAMURTHY

Historically people have had an almost symbiotic relationship with the Earth as a living, sacred source of vitality. We have revered special sites that we feel are conducive to our physical, mental and spiritual revitalisation. We hold these places as sacred and set apart from the normal functioning of everyday life. We build shrines at these sites to focus our attention and cherish them as repositories of a special energy that can restore in us the link to the divine presence we call God in whatever language or belief we may use.

When traditional civilisations such as the Chinese and the Japanese describe a mountain as sacred, they are not simply projecting wishful thinking onto these sites, but are aware that each of these mountains is a living being embodying a telluric force. The Chinese believe that lines of sacred power called *feng shui*, run across the countryside. In Europe, the same concept is identified as 'ley lines', sacred paths, and were known to prehistoric travellers. Ancient sacred sites tend to remain sacred irrespective of the religion prevailing at the time, as for example, in Europe many Christian churches have been built on

the sites of pagan temples. Mecca was an ancient place of worship long before Muhammad destroyed the numerous shrines dedicated to many minor deities and left only one intact, the Ka'ba. It is said to have been built by Abraham and his son Ishmael.

There are specific places on this planet which hold a special resonance. Yet it is difficult to rationally explain why a sacred spot is where it is. Why is Mecca situated in Saudi Arabia? Why is Mount Fuji in Japan? Why is Varanasi where it is on the banks of the Ganga? Would these places be differently located if say, Hindus were the sole occupants of Saudi Arabia? What if the Arabs populated the land we call Japan? Is a site specific to a particular religion or is it a universal site attracting people of all faiths?

We express our yearning for the seemingly unattainable by following diverse religious practices and by developing a sacred architecture associated with sites where we can commune with a higher power. In Hinduism, there are three principal methods whereby a sacred place is established. First, there is the *swayambhu*, a place that has always been sacred irrespective of human habitation. In India, these sites are usually identified, as Joythi Lingas and Shakti Peetas. The Arunachaleswara temple's principal linga is a swayambhu. The second category is the place where a higher being's physical body has been interred either after physical death as in the case of Ramana Maharshi or, as in the example of Mantralayam in Karnataka, where the great saint Raghavendra Swamy was, at his own request, deliberately entombed while physically alive. The third type of site is created when the repeated recitation of mantras and the performance of rituals energises a previously mundane site.

People from earlier ages were spiritually closer to their surroundings than the inhabitants of our post-industrial societies. They were closer to the natural rhythms of the seasons and the forces of terrestrial and super-terrestrial life in the surrounding galaxies. Numinous powers reside in nature and our ancestors were keenly aware of their place in the scheme of things. Today we are not only disconnected from the earth that bears us, but also many of us are derisive of its influence on our lives. More recently this attitude has changed slightly as more people acknowledge the sheer power of Gaia. This planet can unleash more power than

man can muster and should command our respect for that alone if for no other reason. We have witnessed this recently when the slight shift in tectonic plates off Sumatra created a destructive tsunami.

Arunachala is a unique place for devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi. It is considered to be the manifestation of Lord Shiva on this earth and was regarded by Bhagavan as his guru. For those of us who seek to follow his example and practise his teaching, Arunachala assumes a vital, and in some cases, dominant role in guiding us on the path to self-realisation. We walk around it and we gaze at it and are absorbed in its ambience. It influences our mental states, and if tradition and Bhagavan are to be believed, it purifies us by removing the tamasic and rajasic tendencies. For many, Arunachala has become an enduring aspect of our worship of the sacred and a constant reminder of why we are either living in Tiruvannamalai or wish to come and visit.

Bhagavan walked on the sacred hill each day and spent many hours gazing at its craggy aspect. Even before his arrival at Arunachala, the hill had a special and powerful role in his life. When he first heard the name Arunachala uttered by an uncle who had visited the town and temple while on a pilgrimage to Tirupati, the young Venkataraman could hardly believe that this place actually existed in this world. For him the word had a divine connotation. Later, after coming to live in Tiruvannamalai, Bhagavan wrote hymns to Arunachala that are replete with metaphysical and emotional wisdom and that are a source of knowledge and inspiration for us today.

It is recorded that Bhagavan said that whilst Mount Kailas is the abode of Lord Shiva, Arunachala *is* Lord Shiva personified. Here we should be aware that Lord Shiva is the formless supreme consciousness which pervades each and every aspect of existence. If asked whether Arunachala is exclusive to one particular religion or cult, we can say with confidence that Arunachala is universal in its meaning and potency. It is the gateway to the higher consciousness towards which we all aspire. It transcends all forms and all thoughts. The Tamil equivalent word for Arunachala is Annamalai which, esoterically means "that which cannot be approached (mentally)." Arunachala is a divine mystery which we, with our limited minds, cannot understand intellectually.

But we subliminally realise that absorption in the mystical hill can lead to jnana. Arunachala is complete and whole in itself, and therefore any specific connection it may have with any other sacred site in the world is purely physical.

On the mundane level, however, we could say that Arunachala is a distinct form and a limited reality that obeys the laws of this universe. Bearing this caveat in mind, we can read with interest about Sadhu Arunachala (Major A.W. Chadwick) who records in his *A Sadhu's Reminiscences*, an extraordinary conversation he had with Bhagavan who said that there was probably a corresponding holy hill exactly opposite to Arunachala on the globe. Major Chadwick writes:

“He used to say that Arunachala was the top of the spiritual axis of the earth. ‘There must,’ he said, ‘be another mountain corresponding to Arunachala at exactly the opposite side of the globe, the corresponding pole of the axis.’ So certain was he of this that one evening he made me fetch an atlas and see if this was not correct. I found, according to the atlas, [that] the exact opposite point came in the sea about a hundred miles off the coast of Peru. He seemed doubtful about this. I pointed out that there might be some island at this spot or a mountain under the sea. It was not until some years after Bhagavan’s passing that a visiting Englishman had a tale of a spot, supposed to be a great secret-power centre, in the Andes somewhere in this latitude. Later I found that though a centre had certainly been started, it had failed. Since then, I have been told of another person who is practising meditation in solitude in the region of the Andes in Ecuador. So, it does appear as though there were some strange attraction about that part of the globe. The earth is not an exact sphere and maps are not so accurate as all that, so we are unable to pin it down to any definite point. It is quite possible that more is going on in that part of the world than we know and this would fit in well with what Bhagavan said. However, I could never discuss the matter with Bhagavan, as it was not until many years after his passing that I had any indication that anything of this sort was happening in those parts. I had many years ago travelled extensively in that country, but had never seen anything which would lead me to think that there might be important spiritual centres there.”



It was known amongst Bhagavan’s devotees that he had indicated his belief in the existence of another and opposite sacred site on the other side of the world. Mrs. Lucia Osborne at least once discussed it with him but the conversation was not recorded.

Dr Ravi Iyer of Virginia, USA, writes about his investigation into the connection between Arunachala and Machu Picchu, the ancient, sacred mountain in Peru, in his article in *The Maharshi*, March/April, 2003. He writes:

“Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi always insisted that the Holy Hill Arunachala was the spiritual axis of the world, even in a physical sense, similar to the geographical North Pole, with its South Pole axis. So strongly did he maintain the view that another holy hill existed on the opposite side of the globe to Arunachala — which was itself remarkable since he normally did not take very rigid positions except on matters concerning the Self and the Heart — that he once made a devotee pull out a world atlas and look for a similar mountain opposite to Arunachala. The only mention we have of this endeavour was that

the search indicated a spot on the continental shelf beneath the Pacific Ocean immediately off the coast of Peru. No further effort seems to have been spent after this, though it appears that Bhagavan may not have supported the conclusion of that research, since he seemed convinced that a land-based mountain existed at the other end of this 'spiritual axis'."

Machu Picchu is the closest known power spot that resonates with a great spiritual force. The site consists of an outer and an inner section. The latter is entered by a single gateway and appears to be of a religious nature since its buildings, with shrines and altars seem to have served a sacred and astronomical function. The Incas who founded the city believed in sacred geography and frequently selected places in the natural landscape, which were assigned great ritual importance. These sanctuaries, which were central to the Incas' religious beliefs and practices, were called *huacas*, and were considered to be the repositories of sacred power. One of the theories about the site is that it was a religious sanctuary for the Acclas or chosen women, an elite of female devotees of the Sun god Inti. Around 170 rich burial sites have been found at Machu Picchu, of which 150 were women. It has been estimated that of around 140 buildings on the site, more than half were ceremonial. At the centre of the town is the Inti Huantana, the ceremonial sun stone and it emulates the shape of the adjacent mountain, Huayna Picchu or 'New Picchu'. In Inca belief stones marked sites of mythological events representing petrified ancestors or embodying sacred forces that were believed to reside in the earth.

Dr. Ravi Iyer in his article further writes that: "This city ... represents one of the immense mysteries of the Inca civilisation. It appears that the Machu Picchu Mountain itself was known as sacred to the Incas from a time before their own civilisation, since the Incas speak of the mountain as the 'Ancient One', who preceded the civilisation of their ancestors.

"There are several striking parallels between the Machu Picchu site and the Shakti culture. The Incas worshipped Machu Picchu as the manifestation of the Divine Mother, the Goddess of the Universe. They referred to Her as 'Paachamama', a name that bears a striking similarity to the name 'Pachaiamman' used for Parvathi in South Indian shrines. (In the early 1900s, the Maharshi spent many

months at the Pachaiamman Temple at the foot of the Hill, outside the town of Tiruvannamalai.) The architecture of the temple city was determined astrologically and astronomically. Various points of the city serve as a kind of giant sextant or observatory from where specific constellations and celestial objects can be plotted and observed. A closer look at the topology of the city reveals a striking resemblance to the Sri Chakra, the Meru architectural topology that characterises Indian Shakti shrines.

"On the psychic plane, multiple individuals with siddhic/occult capacities have separately asserted on visiting Machu Picchu that the city is a place where the feminine aspect of the Universe is especially palpable.

"While the geographical coordinates are not exactly opposite to those of Arunachala, it would be unreasonable to expect it to be exact since the earth is not a precise sphere.

"...While ultimately there is nothing but the Self, as long as the manifested world is our framework of reference then we will be confronted by the dual pairs of balancing opposites. There can be no Siva without Shakti, and vice versa." ▲

Dr. Ravi Iyer has kindly provided some notes and references for those who are interested in following up on this subject on the Internet.

The URL to the astrodiest website for latitude-longitude determination is: <http://www.astro.com/cgi/aq.cgi?lang=e>

The global coordinates for Tiruvannamalai and Machu Picchu are:

Tiruvannamalai: 12n13, 79e04

Machu Picchu: 13s07, 72w34

If you do a precise reversal of Tiruvannamalai's coordinates you will indeed fall off the coast of Peru. You can confirm this by going to the following website and entering the precise reverse coordinate of Tiruvannamalai:

<http://www.fourmilab.ch/earthview/vlatlon.html> (The site shows a satellite view. Make sure you are viewing earth from a 10 Km height).

Regarding information on Machu Picchu, check out: "Machu Picchu" <http://www.sacredsites.com/2nd56/21422.html>

"Machu Picchu, Crown Jewel in the Clouds"

<http://www.he.net/~mine/inca/>. This site has the Meru-like (Sri Chakra) architecture of the city.



Sri Ramana, Friend of Animals

Monkey Stories

EDITED BY MICHAEL HIGHBURGER

This is the third selection from Hobbler and the Monkeys of Arunachala, a collection of colour-illustrated anecdotes of Bhagavan's life with monkeys. Like the recent Ashram publication, Life of Lakshmi the Cow, this volume is adapted from Prof. V. Niranjan's rendering of Hari Hara Subramanian and M.G. Balu's Tamil Prani Mitra. The artwork here is by Surya Park Young Sun and Lupa.

Friends on the Giri Pradakshina Path

As the monkey-warrior Hanuman helped Prince Rama free Sita and conquer the land of Lanka, Bhagavan Sri Ramana also witnessed instances of monkey charity. His *samathva* (treating all alike) was not merely theoretical but extended to all, including the monkeys of the hill. On occasion the latter demonstrated their gratitude. Once during the days at Virupaksha, Bhagavan set out with a number of devotees to make the customary circumambulation of the hill. The circuit is some 14 km and for a leisurely trip, devotees often needed several hours or even a full day depending on the season. As devotees walked along, one of them noticed what he imagined to be the same troop of monkeys moving along nearby...



DEVOTEE: There's fruit all over the road but the monkeys are not eating a single one!

ASHRAMITE: I think the fruit is intended for us!

Devotees begin collecting the fruit and eating it with great relief.

ANOTHER DEVOTEE: Surely, this is Bhagavan's doing!

ASHRAMITE: Yes, they've received Bhagavan's hospitality and affection on the mountain and are now giving in return. What Bhagavan has always said about the generous side of their nature is proving true here before our very eyes!

DEVOTEE: That would explain it. By Arunachala's grace without saying anything, the monkeys have understood his desire and have come to our aid! Did he not sing: "O Arunachala, you bid me come here—come now and provide for me!"

DEVOTEE: What? Are the monkeys going around the hill with us?

ASHRAMITE: It would seem so. We take the road; they take the branches! Ashram dogs regularly follow Bhagavan's orders and guide visiting devotees unfamiliar with the parikrama¹ path. Perhaps this monkey troop is acting under orders as well.

DEVOTEE: At least they have the shade of the trees to keep them cool!

Around 1-00 pm devotees trudge along tired and hungry, having missed their midday meal. As they draw near Pachaiamman Temple, Bhagavan overhears their mutterings about hunger and thirst and so decides to pause for rest. Bhagavan observes the monkeys climbing a nearby jambool tree² and shaking its branches. Pieces of the ripe juicy fruit rain down on the path but the monkeys themselves do not come down to collect them.

¹ Parikrama or giri pradakshina is the time-honoured pilgrimage path around Arunachala Mountain. Along its circuit lie dozens of mantapas, sacred tanks, and shrines as well as the *ashtalingam* honouring the Gods of the eight major directions.

² *Eugenia jambolana*, the rose apple tree, gives a purplish juicy fruit, which, besides being fortifying and thirst-quenching, is said to have medicinal properties.



Death of a King

There were a number of instances where Sri Bhagavan assisted creatures, animal and human, in the last moments of their earthly existence. From his own loving hands Valli the deer, Lakshmi the Cow, and Jackie the Dog left the body as did Palaniswami and Bhagavan's own mother, Alagammal.

As for the monkeys of Arunachala, Bhagavan also witnessed friends among them come and go, some due to wounds sustained in battle for the monkey throne. Like the struggles surrounding human leadership succession, on occasion male monkeys would band together and initiate coups to put one of their number in power.³ Often two lesser dominant males would form an alliance in order to oust a ruler. Bhagavan noted this remarkable behaviour and on occasion was even privy to coronation ceremonies.

One day an ashramite discovers an old monkey down below Skandashram and approaches Sri Bhagavan...

ASHRAMITE: Bhagavan, a monkey is lying below. He looks as if he's dying.

Bhagavan comes out to have a closer look. Coming to the side of the dying monkey, Bhagavan inquires of him...

BHAGAVAN: What happened to you, poor fellow?

Bhagavan and the ashramites move the ailing monkey closer to the Ashram while other monkeys watch nearby. They lay him near Bhagavan who lifts his head...

BHAGAVAN: Oh, my goodness, it's you! The old monkey-king!

DEVOTEE: Which monkey-king?

BHAGAVAN: *(Looking intently at its face)* Yes, the same monkey-king.

Bhagavan lifts the monkey onto his lap. The latter looks up at him sadly.

BHAGAVAN: King of the monkeys! Don't fear anything. Be brave!

³ Decades later primatologists confirmed Bhagavan's observations about primate hierarchies and power struggles, e.g., that monkeys form "coalitions" (Jane Goodall 1975).





The monkey opens his eyes and, in a daze, looks up at Bhagavan. When Bhagavan moves his leg to adjust his posture, the monkey gets a fright and in his confused near-death state, suddenly bites Bhagavan's leg. Bhagavan winces slightly.

DEVOTEE: My goodness, Bhagavan!

BHAGAVAN: *(Smiling and seemingly unconcerned)* Don't worry. It isn't serious. There are four scars on this body, all reminders of the honours done me by monkeys! *(Addressing the monkey)* What do you say, King?

Bhagavan looks up to the trees where two other monkeys sit watching.

BHAGAVAN: *(Indicating the two in the tree)* You see those two there? They are the two chieftains once banished by this king.

A very faint sound is heard from the throat of the monkey-king, prone in Bhagavan's lap, labouring for breath. Bhagavan pours a little water into his mouth from his kamandala⁴ but it does not go down...

BHAGAVAN: *(Sadly)* It's over.

Bhagavan passes his hand affectionately over the head of the deceased king. The two up in the nearby tree express their sorrow with cries and moans. Then Bhagavan relates the following story...

BHAGAVAN: *(To devotees)* We used to call him *Mottaipaiyan*⁵. The two male monkeys sitting in the tree were once disobedient, so this

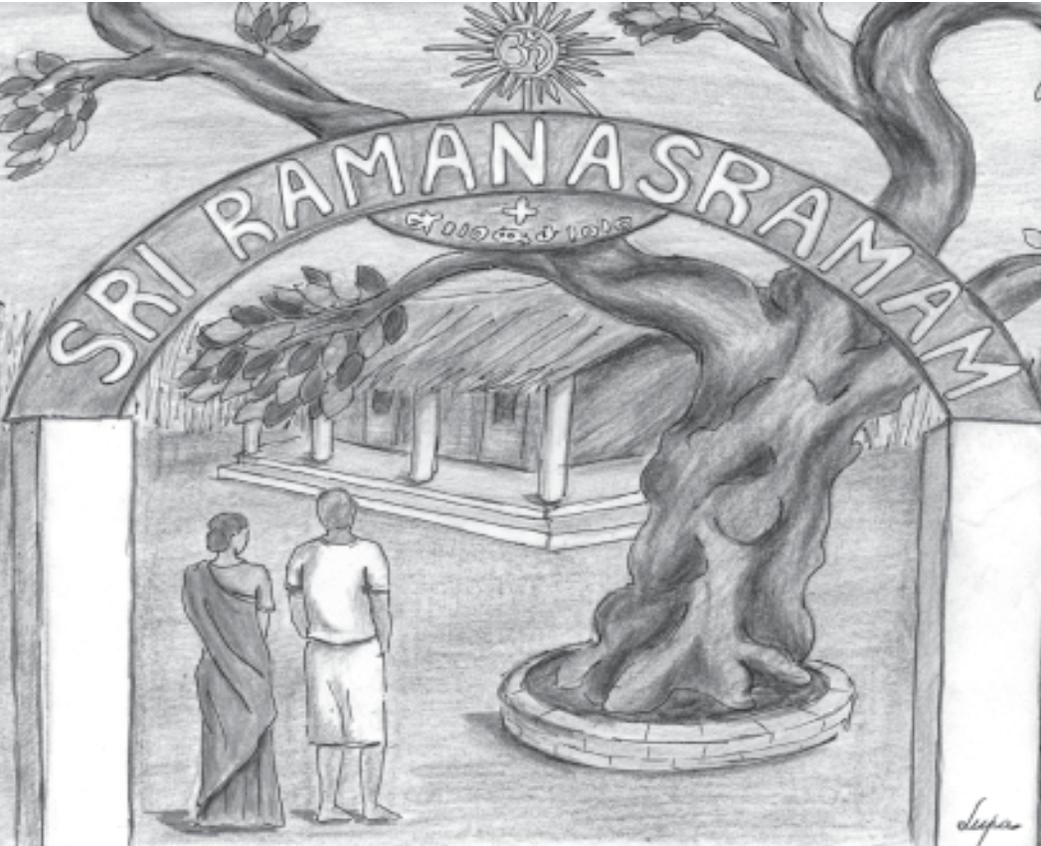
⁴ Sacred water pot used by sannyasis and renunciates.

⁵ *Mottaipaiyan* is a colloquialism meaning "baldy" or "bald-headed boy".

king banished them. But the others rose in revolt against him. The king was very sensitive to the indignity done him by his subjects, so he left them and went into the forest. There he acquired strength and at length returned to the tribe. When he returned two weeks later, he sat on the bough of a large pipal tree and shook its branches. These two and all the rest who had previously ill-treated him were now quaking before him. In this way he subdued the rebels. Where did he get the strength to overcome the rebels? No doubt when in the forest he undertook *tapas* and having acquired strong will power, overcame his opponents.

Bhagavan lifts up the corpse of the dead King and places it carefully on the stone ledge. In due course the required preparations are made and last rites for the monkey are performed. Bhagavan gives the departed ruler all the honours befitting a sannyasi. The monkey's body is anointed with water, then milk and vibhuti. A new piece of cloth serves as a shroud, leaving the face uncovered. Camphor is lit, as is done for sannyasis, and the monkey-king's face shines like that of a pious hermit. Then he is entombed and over the gravesite a painted stone is installed. It reads:





Grandpa Comes to Visit

In May 1922, Bhagavan's mother attained Mahanirvana at Skandashram and was interred at the base of the southern side of the mountain. After some time, a thatched roof was erected over the samadhi. Bhagavan came to visit regularly. Eventually he left Skandashram once for all and came to settle at this shrine. The community that grew up around her samadhi in time came to be called Sri Ramanasramam.

Two months after Bhagavan moved down from the hill, Hobbler, Bhagavan's lame-footed friend of old, came searching for him and continued to visit him every fortnight. Others of the monkey clans from the mountain had not forgotten their old friend and journeyed surprisingly long distances just to see Bhagavan. Bhagavan was always able to recognize their faces, even those whom he had not seen for some time.

Once while Bhagavan and Kunjuswami were sitting on a bench they suddenly heard the shrieks and cries of monkeys in a distant banyan tree. Bhagavan started rather hurriedly for the tree. Bhagavan

would often go and give fruit to monkeys but Kunjuswami had never seen him do so with such urgency.

When they arrived, there were about twenty monkeys in the tree. In the midst of them was an old monkey holding a baby. Bhagavan approached him and listened with utmost attention to the cries of the old fellow. The expression on Bhagavan's face turned to sorrow...

BHAGAVAN: Grandpa! What ill fortune has befallen you! At this advanced age, you have to care for this young one! I'm sorry! But look after him with care. It is your *punya!*

KUNJUSWAMI: (*unable to follow any of this*) What is it, Bhagavan?

BHAGAVAN: Do you see his plight? The mother of this baby monkey has died. The monkey custom requires the oldest among the group to look after orphans. Now the responsibility of bringing up this baby rests on our grandpa.⁶

Bhagavan continues...

BHAGAVAN: To tell their woeful tale, they've come to us cautiously as this is not their territory. When we were at Skandashram this same grandpa and clan used to come to us quite often. As we have kingdoms and laws, so too these monkeys have kingdoms, laws, and each kingdom its king. Our grandpa was king of the hill. From the foot of the hill to Shona Tirtham there is another kingdom. One should not trespass into another's kingdom; to do so is a crime. That is why they came to us so quietly and stealthily, so as not to attract any notice. See how much trouble we are to these monkeys!

After receiving fruit from Bhagavan's hands, the troop departs one by one. While leaving, the old monkey looks back at Bhagavan...

BHAGAVAN: Grandpa! Don't be afraid! Take care of the little one. Before you is Arunachaleswara who saves all! Go! We will meet again!

The old monkey leaves reluctantly, gazing back all the while at Bhagavan like an unwilling child leaving its mother.

⁶Only in 1987 did primatologists publish findings that monkeys practise adoption. [See Goodall's work in *National Geographic Society Magazine*, Dec 1995, pp. 102-29].

Taking Refuge in Bhagavan

Once Sita presented Hanuman with a necklace set with valuable gems. Finding on it no sign of Lord Rama, Hanuman rejects it saying it is worthless as it is devoid of Lord Rama's image. Sita retorted, "Hanuman, then your body must be equally worthless for Lord Rama's image is nowhere engraved on it!" At that Hanuman tore open his breast and lo, everyone present was amazed to see the figure of Rama engraved on each of his ribs!

Just as with Hanuman, the archetype of devotion, devotees saw loyalty and devotion among Bhagavan's monkeys. One could easily see the fondness and respect they had for him. And their love was reciprocated. Devotees who came in later years did not realize how close the connection between them was but they saw that whenever there was strife over the rightful ownership of food items, Bhagavan invariably sided with them. When an attendant was on guard with his stick, Bhagavan would often send him away on some errand, allowing the monkeys to roam in complete freedom and to enjoy themselves fully.

One time some monkey youngsters entered the hall. When the attendants chased them, the little ones ran straight to Bhagavan and



scrambled under his sofa. They knew no one would touch them as long as they were close to him. Seeing them in their place of refuge, the attendants withdrew their pursuit while the little ones took full advantage of the situation, even taunting the attendants by making faces at them. Bhagavan was filled with amusement and made it quite clear on whose side he was, rewarding the little buggers with fruit and nuts! ▲

Meditation in Sankara's Vedanta

Introduction

JONATHAN BADER

The following is the first of a series of essays freely adapted by the author from his Meditation in Sankara's Vedanta published by Aditya Prakshan Publications, Biblia Impex Private Limited 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi -110002 (India) Tel: 23278034, 23262515 Fax: 91-11-23282047E-Mail: contact@bibliaimpex.com

Traditional accounts of Sankara's life relate that he was charged by his guru to spread the teachings of Advaita Vedanta throughout India. Accompanied only by a small band of disciples, he journeyed to the four quarters of the subcontinent. The nature of his mission was twofold. First, there were the rounds of debates in which Sankara is said to have defeated prominent exponents of other philosophical persuasions. In conjunction with these public demonstrations of the pre-eminence of Advaita, he undertook the composition of learned commentaries so as to re-establish the 'correct understanding' of the

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Vedanta teachings. His second task involved the foundation of monastic centres where the teachings were to be studied and practised.

However one might choose to account for it there can be little doubt that Sankara has had a profound impact upon Indian culture. Whether the works of earlier interpreters were actually superseded by him, or have simply disappeared, Sankara's compositions alone have survived. His works comprise the oldest extant commentaries on the primary sources of the Vedanta tradition: the *Brahmasutra*, the *Bhagavadgita*, and ten of the principal Upanishads. The monastic centres he is said to have founded are still in operation and the spiritual authority of their pontiffs is highly regarded in India today. Most remarkable of all is Sankara's achievement in establishing the orthodoxy of his radical interpretation of the Upanishads. He managed to argue convincingly against the belief, widely held in his day, that Brahman and *atman*, though identical, were somehow distinct. Sankara sought to throw out this notion of distinction. With his exegetical prowess he gathered together the strands of non-dualistic thought in the Upanishads and presented it as the underlying truth of Vedanta. By the beginning of this century Sankara's work had already begun to receive considerable attention in Europe, largely due to the enthusiastic efforts of F. Max Müller and Paul Deussen. The success of their endeavour is evident from the large body of scholarly literature which has since focussed on Sankara. Indeed, his work has probably received a disproportionate amount of attention at the expense of other Vedântins whose work still languishes in relative obscurity. But there must be something inherently appealing in the thought of this eighth century teacher and metaphysician. Perhaps it is the peculiar combination of rigorous philosophical argument and the inspired expression of mystical insight in his work which continues to excite interest both within and outside India.

In the early 1950s there were two major developments in the field which have given new impetus to the study of Sankara. Firstly, the thoroughgoing investigations of Professors Hacker, Nakamura, and Ingalls gave definition to the historical context of Sankara's work. For the first time Sankara's thought was clearly distinguished from that of his predecessors and followers. Secondly, the discovery of a hitherto unknown text has pointed to an unrecognized facet of Sankara's thought.

This text, the *Yogasutra-bhasya-vivarana*,¹ is an apparently authentic commentary of Sankara's on Vyasa's authoritative exposition of Patanjali's *Yogasutra*.

It is yet to be conclusively proved that this 'new' text was indeed composed by Sankara. Nevertheless, its existence raises several important issues. Amongst the most notable of these is the problem of determining the place of yoga in Sankara's Vedanta. In addressing this question, in a series of articles in *The Mountain Path* this study will concern itself with one essential aspect of yoga practice, namely, meditation. Indeed it will be argued that meditation is a key to the understanding of Sankara's teaching on liberation.

Surprisingly, there has been little scholarly attention devoted to Sankara's interest in meditation. When the subject has been taken up, the connection between meditation and liberation is invariably treated rather superficially. In some ways this is to be expected. After all, Sankara himself emphasises that ritual action and knowledge are not to be combined. Most of his Upanishad commentaries are introduced by a discussion which seeks to discredit the efficacy of ritual action. Knowledge, he claims, is the only valid means to liberation. Since meditation is a form of ritual action, albeit a mental one, it too is necessarily excluded. Nevertheless, Sankara does accord a place to meditation as a preliminary discipline. Though it plays only a supporting role, it is an extremely important one. For meditation represents the most direct means of encouraging the arising of knowledge.

It has all too often been overlooked that there is a substantial difference between Sankara's aims as an exegete and those he pursues as a teacher. This becomes especially apparent in the case of meditation. In his exegetical discussions he seeks to diminish the importance of the position which meditation holds in the Upanishads. Because his compositions mostly take the form of commentaries, the evidence we have of Sankara's teaching methods is less obvious than that of his exegetical efforts. Fortunately however, we can also refer to one major

¹ *Patanjala-yogasutra-bhasya-vivaranam* of Sankara-Bhagavatpada, ed. Polakam Sri Rama Sastri and S. R. Krishnamurthi Sastri ('Madras Government Oriental Series' no. 94; Madras 1952).

independent treatise, the *Upadesasahasri*, which is now known to be one of Sankara's authentic works. The prose portion of this text is set out in the form of a guide book on the teaching of Advaita. The method Sankara elaborates here is remarkably similar to the teaching of the legendary sage Yajnavalkya, described in *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad* 2.4.5. This ancient teaching told of a threefold process, *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*, leading to the highest knowledge. First, the aspirant was to hear the sacred verses from the teacher, then to reflect deeply upon them, and finally, to become absorbed in constant meditation on what had been learned. Sankara took up this way of knowledge and expounded it in accordance with the principles of his Advaita Vedanta.

The influence of yoga upon Sankara's work is clearly reflected in his understanding of meditation. But the implications of the relationship between yoga and Advaita extend well beyond the common ground of meditation. Sankara seems to have been profoundly affected by many of the ideas Vyasa expressed in his *Yogasutra-bhāṣya*. Some concepts which are characteristic of Sankara's thought can be traced back to Vyasa's text. Paul Hacker was the first to make an extensive study of Sankara's yoga connections. He argues, "That the *Yogabhāṣya vivaraṇa* is a work of the same Sankara who has composed the BSBh can be established on the assumption that he was first a Yogin and then became an Advaitin."² While many of Hacker's insights are of great value, some of his implicit assumptions seem rather doubtful. There is little evidence to support the notion that Advaita and yoga are opposing philosophical systems. On the contrary, the yoga element in Sankara's work appears to be an integral part of his Advaita Vedanta.

Sankara does not regard yoga as a system of thought based on Patanjali's *Yogasutra*. He refers to this text simply as a *yogasāstra*, a treatise on yoga.³ He seems to have been familiar with a number of these *śāstra*-

s but does not cite the particular authority of any one of them. What is more, he does not believe that the exposition of yoga is limited to the *yogasāstra*-s. Even the Upanishads describe yoga, although in a rather unsystematic manner. The testimony of the Upanishads is sufficient reason for Sankara to accept the validity of yoga practice. In this ongoing study in *The Mountain Path* yoga will be taken largely in the sense in which Sankara understood it. Whether yoga is presented in a comprehensive treatise or in a less systematic fashion, it is a method of transformation comprising a variety of psychological and physical disciplines. The objective of these activities is the mastery over mind and body which results in the acquisition of power. The power of yoga is the agent of transformation. It is the means by which the yogi accomplishes superhuman feats. This power can also be utilised to transcend the limitations of individuality which obstruct the quest for liberation.

There are two preliminary problems which are crucial to the development of this study. The first concerns methodology. Aside from a piece by Daniel H. H. Ingalls,⁴ very few of the recent studies on Sankara have considered the relative merits of their respective approaches to this complex figure. Sankara is at once a teacher, a metaphysician, theologist, mystic, and, in India, the stuff of mythology. Yet Sankara so often seems to be reduced to two-dimensionality. He is taken to be simply an author of texts, a philosopher whose work evolves in an orderly and predictable manner. While there are no easy solutions to establishing a suitable means of approach, a critical discussion of some of the recent scholarship may at least be a start. The second problem is one of definition. In spite of the considerable attention, both scholarly and popular, which meditation has enjoyed, the nature of meditation remains surprisingly indistinct. It will be essential to clarify the terms 'meditation', and 'contemplation', as well as their Sanskrit equivalents, before considering Sankara's treatment of the subject.

This series of essays, then, is a re-examination of Sankara's work in the light of his interest in yoga. The focal point of the study is Sankara's teaching on liberation, particularly with regard to meditation. ▲

⁴ *The Study of Sankaracarya*, Bhandarkar Oriental Institute Annals, 33 (1952), pp.1-14.



Mastan

DAVID GODMAN

Mastan, one of Bhagavan's early devotees, was born in 1878 in Desur, a small village about forty miles from Tiruvannamalai. He came from a Muslim weaving family but was drawn to Bhagavan by Akhilandamma, a widow of the village who made regular trips to Tiruvannamalai to see Bhagavan and cook for him.

When he was young he would spontaneously fall into a *samadhi*-like state while he was working on the family loom. His hands and feet, which were plying the machinery of his trade, would stop and he would become absolutely still. His parents, Hussain and Salubi, thought that he was falling asleep on the job. Whenever they saw him in this condition, they would hit him, bring him back to his waking state, and tell him to get on with his work. These episodes seem to have been a recurring feature of his childhood.

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Not much more is known about Mastan's life until the day he accompanied Akhilandamma on his first visit to Tiruvannamalai in 1914. This is how Mastan described the meeting when he spoke to Kunju Swami:

When I came to Bhagavan, he was seated like a rock.... [His unwavering gaze] was filled with grace, compassion and steady wisdom. I stood by his side. After giving me a look, he opened the gate of my Heart and I was also established in his state. I stood like that for eight hours, absolutely without fatigue, but filled with total absorption and peace. Bhagavan in those days used to open our Heart with a simple gracious look, and it transformed us. There was no need for any questions since he made us, by his look, like himself.¹

These *samadhi* experiences happened more than once. Bhagavan himself once mentioned them to Viswanatha Swami:

'Among those who show up in a normal human body, and who subsequently stay on and become devotees, there is a huge range of spiritual attainment: complete beginners mix with highly advanced souls. The most advanced are ripe fruits, just waiting to fall. They only have to come into the presence of a *jnani* in order to plunge into a deep experience of the Self. One such devotee was Mastan.

'He was such a ripe soul, when he came to Virupaksha Cave to see me he would sometimes go into a deep *samadhi* before he had even entered the cave. As soon as he touched the railings of the gate, he would have a paralysing experience of the Self. He would stand, rooted to the spot, unable to move, for six or seven hours. This happened several times. Usually, these experiences would happen before he had even seen me since I would be inside the cave, unaware of what was going on at the gate.

'Mastan was in an entirely different category to most of the people who came. He was highly spiritual, although outwardly he looked

¹All the information in this account has come from *The Power of the Presence*, Part Three, pp. 22-42. A fuller account of Mastan's life and details of all the sources used in this article can be found there.



Mastan's Samadhi

like an ordinary man. He was a kind generous man who was always looking for an opportunity to help other people. He never showed any self-importance. On the contrary he liked to stay in the background, unnoticed and unappreciated by ordinary people.’

These *samadhi* states did not give him a full and permanent experience of the Self. When his mind reasserted itself, he went to Bhagavan for advice:

Once, while I was on my way to see Bhagavan, I prayed for his grace.

On my arrival at Virupaksha Cave he asked, ‘Do you like *saguna upasana* [meditation or worship of form], or do you like *nirguna upasana* [meditation or worship of the formless]?’

I replied, ‘I only want *nirguna upasana*’.

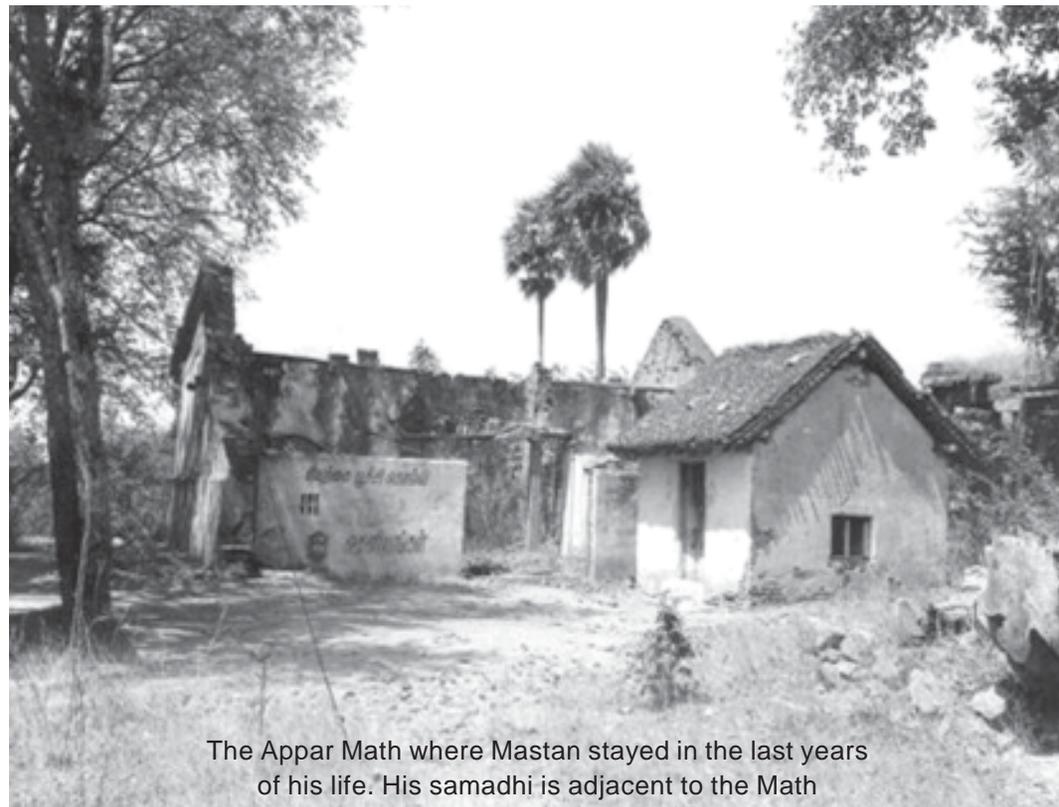
Bhagavan then told me, ‘Fix the mind in the Heart. If you keep your attention at the source from where all thoughts arise, the mind will subside at the source and reality will shine forth.’

I had already come across similar teachings in *Maharaja Turavu* and *Sukar Kaivalyam*. I had also seen these instructions in several other books. I took a firm decision that this was the way for me. After this meeting with Bhagavan I had no further doubts about this. No doubts at all.

In 1914, shortly after Mastan had become a devotee, he and Akhilandamma decided to open a *math* in the village of Desur that would function as a choultry, a place where visiting *sadhus* and pilgrims could be accommodated and fed. Many of the *sadhus* from Ramanasramam came to stay there, particularly when they were sick and needed someone to look after them.

When the building was completed, Mastan regularly did *parayana* of Bhagavan’s works there. By this time Mastan had more or less abandoned his career as a weaver, although he did go back to work occasionally to weave the cloth that was used to make Bhagavan’s *kaupinas*.

Bhagavan once remarked, with great joy, ‘Mastan’s craft, though it did not give food either to him or his parents, gives me clothes.’



The Appar Math where Mastan stayed in the last years of his life. His *samadhi* is adjacent to the Math

Mastan has recorded one other meeting he had with Bhagavan:

For some time, while I was meditating at night for about an hour, I used to hear the sound of a big bell ringing. Sometimes a limitless effulgence would appear. In 1922 when I visited Bhagavan at his new ashram at the foot of the hill, I asked him about this.

He advised me, ‘There is no need to concern ourselves about sounds such as these. If you see from where it rises, it will be known that it arises on account of a desire [*sankalpa*] of the mind. Everything appears in oneself and subsides within oneself. The light, too, only appears from the same place. If you see to whom it appears, mind will subside at the source and only reality will remain.’

Mastan continued to visit Bhagavan throughout the 1920s, although his visits were less frequent than in earlier years. During this period devotees from Ramanasramam would often visit nearby towns where Bhagavan's devotees stayed. If Mastan came to hear about this, he would try to get there first. Viswanatha Swami has described what would happen on these occasions:

On some of these trips Mastan would somehow find out in advance where we were going. We would arrive at a town, Polur for example, and find him waiting for us. Once he had discovered our whereabouts, he would make us sit while he went out begging for us. We didn't want to be served in this way, but Mastan was very insistent. He told us on these occasions that he was the 'devotee of devotees', a role and a title that he took on himself.

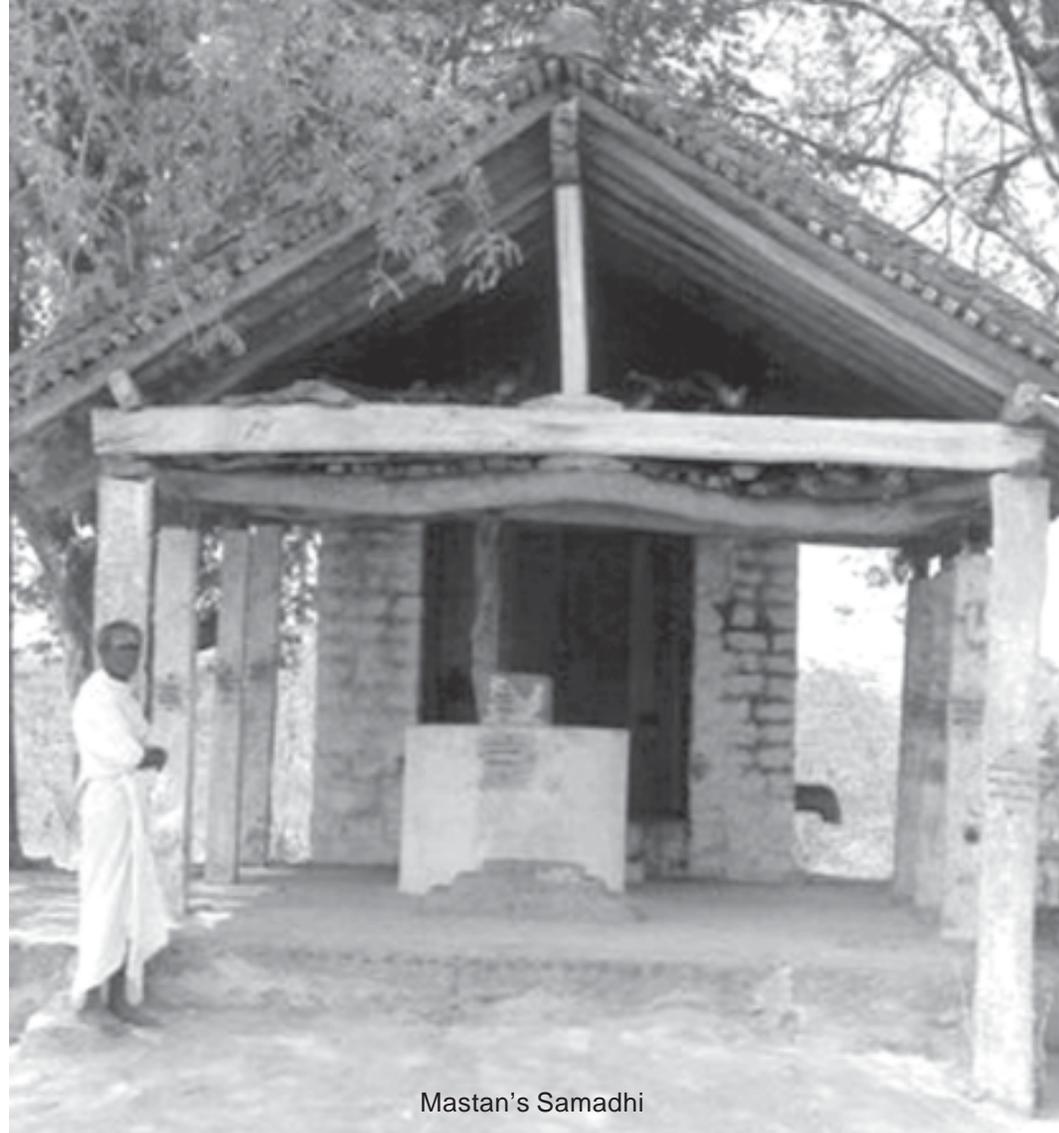
He would say, 'I want to serve the devotees of Bhagavan. You must stay here while I find food for you.'

Mastan would generally return with a huge amount of food, far more than we could possibly eat. After we had eaten as much as we could, we would share the leftovers with any local people who lived nearby. If we were living in caves or other out-of-the-way places, we would give the leftovers to monkeys.

As he fed us Mastan would make one persistent request: 'Please tell me some stories about the glory of our Master. Tell me everything he has said during the time I was not with him. To me, every word Bhagavan speaks is holy. The words that come out of his holy mouth are so powerful, merely listening to them can give liberation to ripe souls.'

Mastan continued to be based near Desur until 1931, the year he passed away. Akhilandamma was present when Mastan died. This is her description of his final moments:

He was sick and bedridden for about a week. During those days he spoke of many things not of this world, as if he were actually seeing them.



Mastan's Samadhi

He said, 'There, Nandiswara [Nandi the bull, the vehicle of Siva] is descending. He is very affectionately licking all over my body! Look! The Siva *ganas* [celestial followers of Siva] are dancing here! See! They are beckoning me to come to their world. Look at those lotus ponds where celestial swans are swimming!'

We thought that this was nothing but delirium, but on the last day a very strange thing happened, and we cannot lightly

dismiss it as delirium. On this day he suddenly got up from his bed and stood up, looking as if someone, face to face, had been calling him.

Then, in great excitement, he exclaimed, ‘Mother Apeetakuchamba,² have you come yourself to escort me?’

The next moment he fell down dead. I immediately sent a message to Bhagavan.

When Bhagavan learned of Mastan’s passing away, he sent Kunju Swami to our village with full instructions on how to make a *samadhi* for Mastan. There is a Tamil book that faithfully gives the details of how saints who have followed Lord Siva have to be buried.³ In accordance with these details Bhagavan drew up a plan of the dimensions of the *samadhi* and sent it along with Kunju Swami. It seemed very strange to us that a Muslim should be given a Saiva saint’s burial and stranger still that Bhagavan, who did not generally encourage ceremonial rites, actually laid down in the minutest detail the rites to be followed in the *samadhi* of Mastan.

Whatever the reason, just as Bhagavan stipulated, we made a tomb for Mastan in our village. It is a village whose population is predominantly Jain. These inhabitants of the village felt that having a Hindu *samadhi* in their midst would be very inauspicious. When they first heard of it, there was even talk of their abandoning the village completely. However, in the time that has passed since Mastan’s *samadhi* was constructed, the village has thrived and grown rich. Nowadays the *samadhi* is a visible deity to all the people from the village, whatever their caste or religion. What a wonder!

Bhagavan only ordered this type of *samadhi* for three of his devotees: his mother, Lakshmi the cow, and Mastan. Since Bhagavan publicly

declared that the first two realised the Self, one can make a strong case for saying that Bhagavan felt that Mastan was also in this state at the time of his death. If this is true, the final realisation must have occurred sometime between 1922, when Mastan was still asking questions about his *sadhana*, and 1931, the year he passed away.

Chockalingam, a local resident, has spoken about the tradition that the *samadhi* has wish-fulfilling powers, something that Akhilandamma referred to in the final paragraph of her account:

‘In the years that followed his *samadhi* everyone noticed that the family affairs and businesses of people who had helped Mastan prospered, whereas those who were opposed to him found that their fortunes declined. Everyone could see what was happening, so people started coming to the *samadhi* to ask for blessings. Even today, many people still come here to pray for their desires to be fulfilled.’

A few days after Mastan passed away, Akhilandamma went to Tiruvannamalai to tell Bhagavan about Mastan’s final days and the vision he had had on his death bed.

After hearing the story, Bhagavan commented, ‘Maybe the universal mother, Apeetakuchamba, personally came to take him. All his descriptions tally with the world of Siva. Mastan was an unassuming devotee. He had a wealth of hidden spiritual experiences. It is a matter for gratification that he passed away in your care and under your supervision.’ ▲

² Apeetakuchamba is the Sanskrit name of the consort of Siva in the Arunachaleswara Temple.

³ The book is *Tirumantiram* by Tirumular. Bhagavan kept a copy of it in his personal library.

On Ramana Maharshi

MUKESH VATSYAYANA

On a hot afternoon in Madurai
 a 16-year-old boy in his room,
 on the table a pile of books and
 unfinished homework. Outside, the sun
 an incandescent fury in the sky.
 Heat-luminescent streets, dusty and vacant,
 coil around the temple and slither
 through the summer-shrivelled town.
 Leaves wear dust to screen out the sun.
 Fat flies drone in the drowsy doorways.
 The 16-year-old boy in his study
 torn between mastering English verbs
 and puzzling over an arithmetical sum
 looks anxiously out the window and stops.
 A frosty touch benumbs his heart, his breathing dims.
 A bullock cart lurches through the street. Death –
 an uncanny presence steals over him.
 Unfazed he decides to play the part.
 He lies down on the floor, arms stiff by his side,
 tries to stop his breath. He stalks death,
 seizes it, scans it, sifts through it,
 and discards it. He knows. His boyish frame
 shudders as the power outward bound,

that arrays in splendid hypnotic hues
 this multiformed multinamed enchantment
 which beguiles and captivates bemused wordlings,
 stops, its onward surge arrested, dashes back
 and plunges inward and down into heart's cavern –
 the source that exists past flesh, past mind,
 past world, past gods, past everything, past nothing.

As the presumptuous bubble of ego collapses
 body mind space time causes conditions
 vanish. Only a tiny waverless flame,
 awareness – pure, poised, ever-present
 remains. An equanimous witness
 of the mundane drama of high passion,
 of the birth and death of gods, demons and men,
 the launch of political movements,
 bitter strife over oppression and freedom,
 of the ascent and decline of fathers and fuhrers.

Nothing stirs. The house is quiet as usual.
 Nothing stops. The world as usual is busy.
 In the grocery shop at the local market
 a somnolent trader dully waves a cloth
 to chase away flies sporting on a bed of jaggery.
 Outside in the shade of a gnarled neem
 an astrologer sleeps, his blind parrot
 surveys the sky and pecks at fortune cards.

The globe on its axis has turned but a few degrees
 but the boy in the room is a boy no more.
 Infinity has clapped her wings around him,
 school, family, home, parents and friends
 are but dying echoes of a granma's tale.
 The world is a remote happening, a mere rumour.
 Ignorance-bearing knot dissolves, light spreads,
 Awake he sheds his radiance on a thousand suns,
 Worlds are awash with the grace of his glance.

Upon the still center his eyes have gazed,
 gazing upon it, he has turned still.
 When he looks, silence looks through him.
 when he walks, an immobility moves.
 Dakshinamurthi for the age of trains and telegrams,
 At the foot of Arunachala Ramana sits
 A beggar scattering in the wind his munificence,
 healing aggrieved hearts with a mere look,
 sharing with them the peace only *jnanis* know,
 guiding the lost on the surest path back home,
 inspiring stutterers to rapturous poetry,
 bringing solace to a widow in her bleak hovel
 and order to spiralling galaxies.

Kavayakunta Ganapathi Muni Project

Vasishtha Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, says Sri M.P. Pandit, “was a versatile genius whose contribution in the many fields to which he turned his attention are yet to be fully assessed.” The Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni Project aims to bring out all the available Sanskrit writings of the Muni in twelve volumes. The first three volumes contain all the *stotras* written by the Muni and each is titled as *stotragranthamala* or *The Book of Adoration*. The fourth volume contains all his writings on the principles of existence and is entitled *tattvagrathamala*. All the *sutra* writings of the Muni have been compiled in both fifth and sixth volumes titled as *stragrathamala*. The seventh volume contains all the commentaries by the Muni on different texts such as the Vedas and Upanishads and is entitled *bhashyagrathamala*. The eighth volume has the writings on Ayurveda and Astronomy and Astrology and is entitled *ayurvedajyotishagrathamala*. The ninth volume contains a treatise on the characters of the Mahabharata and has been titled originally by the Muni as *bharatacaritramimamsa*. The tenth volume is *Purna*, a novel in Sanskrit. It is planned to put all the miscellaneous writings of the Muni in the eleventh volume. The twelfth volume will have different indices to all the eleven volumes. All these volumes will be published by the Ramanasramam. All those who want to contribute towards this project can send DDs to Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, earmarked as “Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni Project”, payable at Pondicherry.

HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

The Gridhaluru Family

S. NILAKANTA RAO

My first darshan of Sri Bhagavan was in May 1942 when I was twenty-six years old. Though I had been to Chidambaram several times as a student pursuing my bachelor of Science, I had not the opportunity to see Bhagavan in spite of my desire after I knew of the Sage in 1935.

It was only after my marriage with Rukmani, daughter of Gridhalur Satya Narayana Rao the brother of Samba Siva Rao from Nellore, who were great devotees of Bhagavan, that my association with him began. It was also I feel, by the blessings of Bhagavan that our alliance was finalised as we had no horoscope for me and Rukmani's family were also strong believers in astrology.

The quite arresting very first darshan of Bhagavan clearly distinguished him from all other saints and sadhus I had seen before. He seemed to live apart from the physical form and was quite detached from it. His look had a remarkable spiritual charm that absorbed the attention of all with magnetic force. When he spoke, the words

seemed to come out of an abyss. One could see immaculate purity and non-attachment. His movements were very refined, lofty and sacred. In his vicinity one's mental distractions were over-powered by an pervasive austere and potent calmness.

The unique bliss of his was directly experienced by all, that is, there was a blissful atmosphere around Bhagavan. In the ecstasy of Grace one loses one's sense of separate individuality and there remains something holy and all pervading which devoured one's personality! This indeed is the Spirit of Arunachala which swallows up the whole Universe by its gracious effulgence.

Since the Gridhaluru family served the ashram from December 1922 with great zeal and enthusiasm surrendering themselves at the feet of Sri Bhagavan, my family spent all our vacation holidays every year at the feet of Bhagavan. The compassion and love of Bhagavan was beyond description. I remember vividly how my father-in-law who suffered from cancer, was looked after by Sri Bhagavan. In the last moments of his life he suffered breathlessness. My wife took Bhagavan by his hand and requested him to see her father. Bhagavan acceded to the request and came and sat by him. He placed his left hand on the head and right hand on the chest. After a few minutes all suffering ended and he closed his eyes peacefully. Bhagavan directed the others there not to disturb him. That was my father in law's end which was with the most gracious blessing he could have received for the service he rendered to the ashram.

On an other occasion when my first son named Arunachala, died before his first birthday we came to Bhagavan. He joined with us in our sorrow and later very compassionately spoke to us: "Who is this Child? Parameswara placed him under your care and he is very fortunate that Arunachala received him back from the chaos of the ocean of life. Parameswara determines our destiny which is changeless and unalterable. So be in peace." These words opened our eyes to the reality and the philosophy of life and ever since then we received various difficult events in our life without being perturbed and peacefully approached the inevitable problems.

Another instance to mention will not be out of place to express our boundless pranams to Bhagavan. In 1946 my second son Vijaya Rama Rao, was seriously ill while at the home of Sri T.N. Venkataraman, the son of the then Sarvadikari. The ladies were afraid as they had to spend many sleepless nights in taking care of the boy. Early one morning, Bhagavan's sister Smt. Alamelu Ammal presented the baby before Bhagavan while he was coming down the Hill. Bhagavan passed his hands over the body of the child and remarked, "The baby is all right. Why are you worried?" To the amazement of all, the face of the boy changed and became quite bright from the gracious touch and the look of Bhagavan. It is evergreen in our memory. The gracious *anugraha* of Bhagavan is ever guiding us and protecting us even in heart-rendering situations in our life.

Another instance of Bhagavan's grace is that though I am no scholar in Telugu, I have been inspired to write Telugu versions of Bhagavan's writings: *Arunachala Pancharatnam*, *Ashtakam*, *Navamanimalai*, *Pathikam*, *Aksharamanamalai*, *Upadesa Saram*, *Atma Vidya*, *Ekatma Panchakam*, *Appala Pattu* and instructions for the guidance of devotees. Besides them there was also the prayer *Ramana Suprabhatham* of Bhagavan and the verses written by Pandit Narendra Kesari of Nepal entitled *Ramana Lahari* translated in simple Telugu.

I submit that it is purely by the abundant grace of Bhagavan that I was prompted to write them and present them, thinking that service to devotees is service to the Lord. I prostrate and offer my pranams at the feet of Bhagavan. May Bhagavan bless me to do more service to the devotees.

To conclude, the features of Bhagavan are soul-stirring. Being in his presence there arises in the mind a powerful visualisation of his splendour. We are attracted to the supreme perfection that Bhagavan realised and demonstrated in his life the truth of life in every seemingly small activity. It is the divine looks of Bhagavan that capture the devotees and draws their attention and inspires them to truly think about 'Who am I'. He is the shining light of the world, and beyond. ▲

Enquiring into the Nature of the Self

JOHN GRIMES

In order to realize that one is the Self, one must enquire into the true nature of the Self; the Self which is not in the least hypothetical. It is the most immediate, direct, and certain perception of all. Because one accepts oneself as the origin of thought, sight, sound, emotion and so forth, one has faith that what one thinks, sees, hears and feels is 'real'. Instead, why not doubt the evanescent things such as thoughts, sights, and sounds, and hold onto that which is always there and is the foundation of it all, your Self. The 'I am' can never be changed into an 'I am not.' What is experienced is always open to doubt; but that someone experiences it is certain.

Is there a truth anywhere which is so definite that it cannot possibly be doubted? Advaita avers that the only thing which one can never logically doubt is the existence of one's own Self. No matter where one seeks or how esoteric the search, ultimately it must be realized that there is a universal constant, one is always there. Why, the very act of doubting oneself is but an affirmation of oneself, for one can always

ask, 'Who exactly is doing the doubting?' To say that 'I do not exist' is to affirm the 'I' who is disbelieving.

Advaita asks one to enquire into exactly who this I is. For a start, how do you refer to yourself? Only as this one single syllable, 'I'. Every person says 'I', but few of us make the effort to know what this 'I' means? Who exactly are we alluding to as 'I'? One usually assumes that one is referring to the physical body when one speaks of 'I', but a little reflection will reveal that the 'I' cannot be the physical body. The body itself cannot say 'I', for it is inert. One says, 'This is my coat, this is my hair, this is my body, this is my name.' What is 'mine' belongs to me. What belongs to me is not me. I am separate from it, I possess it. Whatever I possess I can dispense with and still remain who I am.

On a deeper level, when one says I, one is referring to the mental faculties of thought, emotion and will. Yet the same analysis applies. These are my thoughts, my feelings — they come and they go. I know them. I am the knower and they are the known. No one says, 'I am this shirt' or 'I am this house'. Likewise, it is a mistake to superimpose one's body, one's thoughts or one's feelings, upon the 'I'.

Then what is the 'I'? Advaita avers that upon awakening from sleep the first thought which arises is the 'I'-thought. One thinks, 'I slept well last night' or 'I am still tired' or 'I am going to the bathroom'. First comes the 'I' and then the drama of one's life follows. Further, there is not a single thought, anytime, which does not first invoke this 'I'. One has never, and will never, have a thought or experience without this 'I' being present. It is the support to which every thought clings. Every thought, either relates directly to the 'I' or indirectly refers to it in connection with other individuals, objects, things, events, opinions, and so on. The 'I' is the basis for everything else — the entire myriad universe of second and third persons, the universe of 'him', 'her' and 'it'. Absolutely everything is rooted in one's 'I'.

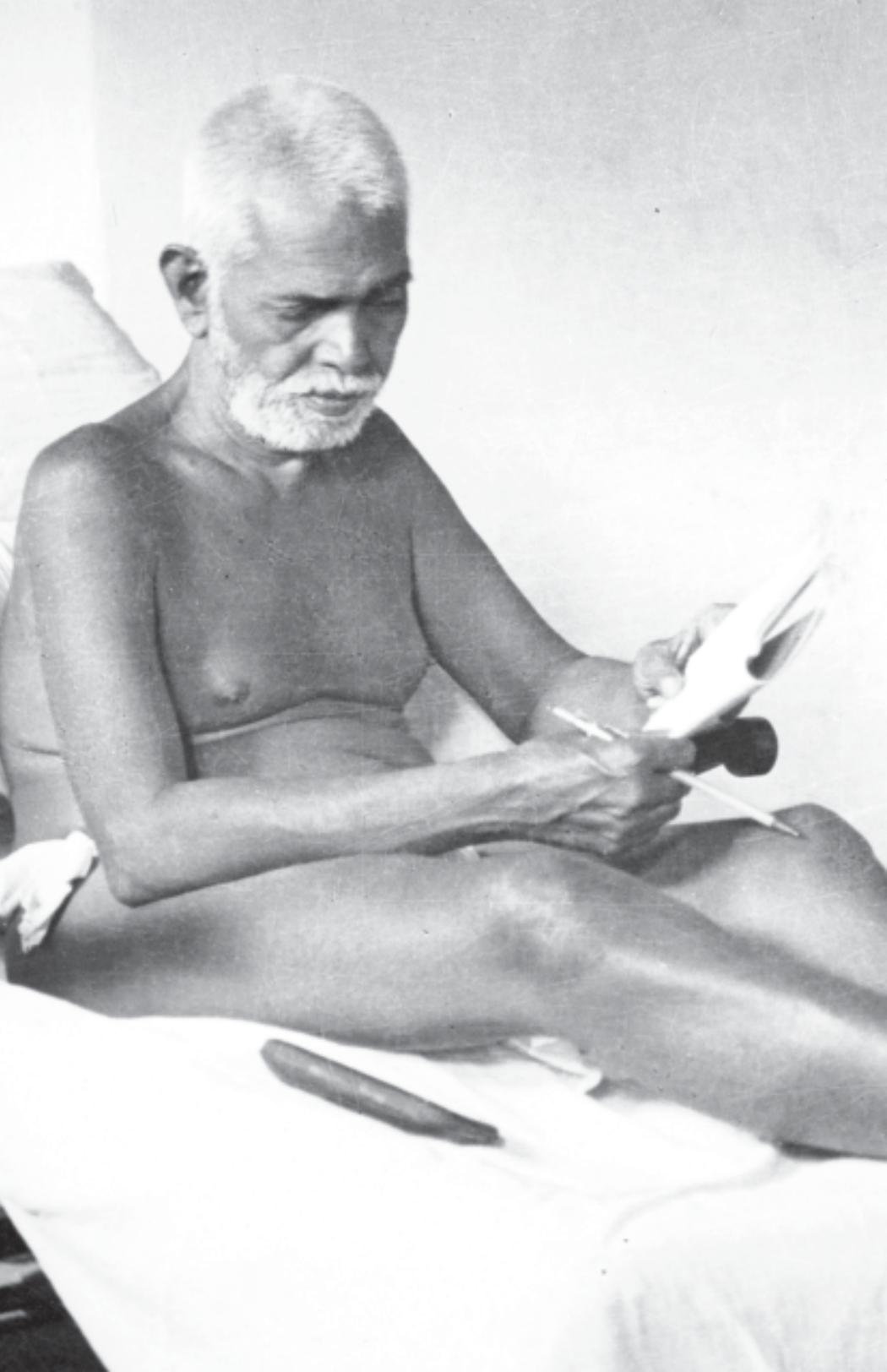
Before anything can come into existence, there must be someone to whom it appears. All appearances and disappearances presuppose a change against some changeless background. The 'I' is that backcloth. One is not the event that happens, but rather the 'I'; to whom things

happen. Who am I? It is enough to know what you are not. The 'I' is not an object to be known. Truly, all one can say is that 'I am not this, not that'. The occurrences and images of the world come and go but the underlying 'I' persists. If one can point to something, one cannot meaningfully say, 'I am (only) that'. If one can point to it, one is more than that. You are not 'something else' and without you, nothing can be perceived or even imagined.

All of a person's existence is encompassed by three states; those of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.¹ If one enquires into these three states one discovers that the waking state teaches one that: i) I exist; ii) there is an external world revealed by an external light that is experienced through the sense organs; iii) what is experienced is taken as real; iv) there is a reality. The dream state teaches one that: i) I exist; ii) one can create a world by one's own inner light; iii) the world one experiences may be a dream, or to put it differently, the Self does not necessarily act and is unattached even though it may appear otherwise (one dreams one is in Paris when in fact one has gone nowhere); iv) the waking state may have no more reality than the dream state. Finally, the deep sleep state teaches one that: i) I exist ; ii) one may exist quite happily without any desires, imperfections, limitations or even a world; iii) the Self is beyond desires; even the feeling, 'I am the body' does not arise. It shows that the Self, unafflicted by desires, is fearless, blissful and has no connection to anything or anyone else.

Throughout these three states of existence, the Self ('I') persists. Everyone has the same intuition that it is the identical 'I' that appears in all the three states. Further, the three states alternate and differ from one another, but the Self, which underlies them, remains unaffected and detached throughout. Surely this reveals that the Self is beyond the changing modes of existence. It is the underlying invisible substrate. It is not the content of any experience but is that which allows all experiences to happen. ▲

¹ *Vivekachudamani*, verses 88-107.



BHAGAVAN'S HANDWRITING

Arunachala Pancharatna Vartikam

Two

As mentioned in the last issue, in 1917 Sri Bhagavan composed *Arunachala Pancharatnam* in Sanskrit which he later translated into Tamil. These are the verses that are still chanted by devotees at the end of the Tamil parayanam.

Sri K. Lakshmana Sharma wrote a Sanskrit commentary on these slokas entitled *Laghu Vritti* (Short Commentary) which he submitted to Bhagavan, who, on perusal of the text, corrected the title to *vartikam*. Vartikam is defined as a supplement which elucidates that which is said, that which is left unsaid, or that which is imperfectly said and needs clarification.

A notebook containing Bhagavan's corrections was submitted to Bhagavan who confirmed his original corrections and added some more verses. The original 79 slokas was increased to 108 slokas. The corrections made by Bhagavan with English and Tamil translations of this Vartikam was again rewritten in a pocket size notebook by Bhagavan himself.

The following are samples from the notebook of the Sanskrit, Tamil and English. We have slightly magnified the writing. - *Editor*

श्री
अरुणाचलपरब्रह्मणे नमः ॥

श्री
अरुणाचल-
-पञ्चरत्न-
-वार्तिकम् ॥

ॐ
श्रीरुण्डुसलपञ्चरत्न-
वार्तिककृत्ति-
णनुवातम्.

Commentary
on the
Arunachala Pancharatnam
(Translation)

ॐ नमो भगवते श्री रमणाय
मंगलम्

- 1 -
सा चिन्मात्र स्वभावाय
नित्यमुक्ताय शंभवे ।
रमणाय आत्मनाथाय
नमो भगवते सादा ॥

ஸ்த்சின்மாத்ர ஸ்வபாவ திக்யமுக்த
ஆத்மநாத ஸிவஸ்வரூபியாண ஸ்ரீ
ரமணபகவானுக்கு எப்பா டுதும்
நமஸ்காரம்.

Homage all the time to the Holy
Ramana, the Inner Self and Lord,
whose Nature is the True Consciousness,
and who is the Giver of Happiness
to all.

- 1 -

अधिष्ठानतया तस्य
विश्वस्यारोपितत्वतः ।
सत्यमस्ति तस्यैव
न तु विश्वस्य कर्हि नित् ॥

அந்த பரமாத்மா அதிஷ்டானமாவதா
லும் உலகம் ஆரோபிதமாவதாலும்
அவனே ஸத்யம். பிறுக்காலும் உல
கம் ஸத்யமல்ல.

Since the Supreme Being is the
Substance (Substratum?) and
the world is an appearance of It,
imposed on Him (by the mind),
He alone is real, not the world
by any means.

- 14 -

अधिष्ठान सद्वैतं
निर्विशेषं निरंशकम् ।
जगद्रूपतया भाति
मनोव्यापार मात्रतः ॥

(ஐகத்தி)னதிஷ்டான ஸக்தியமாண
நிர்விசேஷ, நிர்அசக, அத்துவித
வஸ்து மனோவியாபார மாத்திரத்தால்
ஐகத்துருவாய்த் தோன்றுகிறது.

Solely by the action of the mind,
the Sole Reality, which is the
Substance (underlying the appearance)
which is without attributes and
without parts, appears as the world.

- 31 -

तदाभासमयं चेदं
स एव परमार्थतः ।
यदेवाद्यन्तयोरेत -
न्मध्ये चेदं तदेव हि ॥

அவ்விடம் ஏபாய்யாய்க் தேரன்னு
மிவ்வுலகும் அவணை. கிது ஆதியிலு
மங்கத்திலு மெதுவாமோ அதுவே
தான் கிடையிலுமாகும்.

The world is in truth the one,
in whom it arises and vanishes.
What it is before and after, that
it is in the middle also, (just as
jewels are gold all the time before
they were made, and in the
interval).

-35-

आभासमात्रो जीवोऽय
चिञ्चडुग्रन्थि रूपकः ।
तच्चिदंशानिदानं तु
भवत्यात्मा परः स्वयम् ॥

ஆயாஸ் மாத்திரண கிங்க ஜீவன்
சிக் ஜடங்கனின் முடிச்சின் உருண்டய
வன். அங்க முடிச்சின் சுகம் சுக்தின்
முலமாவது பர ஆத்மாவை.

This individual soul is just a false
appearance, consisting of a confusion
of Pure Consciousness with the uncon-
scious (body, mind etc.). The Source
of its element of Consciousness is
the Supreme Self Himself.

-54-

स्वामिनो गन्धमादाय
यथाश्वात् गवेषयेत् ।
शुद्धाहन्ता तथादाय
धीः स्वमूलं गवेषयेत् ॥

न वक्तुं नापि मन्तुं वा
शक्यमेतत् परं पदम् ।
मौनव्याख्यान निर्देश्यं
वेद्यं च स्वानुभूतितः ॥

எப்படி (தன் உடையவனைப் பிரிந்து) நாய்
அவ்வடையவனின் மணக்கூத்துக்
கொண்டு அவனைக் தேடுமோ, அம்-
படியே மதிசூத்து அகண்கணையக்
கொண்டு தன் சிலக்கூத்துத் தேட
வேண்டும்.

இந்தப் பரமபதம் சொல்லவும் எண்
ணவ்மொண்ணொ மொண்ண உரையால்
காட்டக்கூடக்கூடாகும். ஆனால் சுவானு
பவத்தா லறியக்கக்கூடா.

As a dog seeks his master taking
hold of his scent, so the mind
should seek its own Source,
taking hold of the purified I.

This Supreme State can not be
described by words or conceived by
the mind. It can be pointed out
only by Silent - Teaching. It is
also to be known by actual
Experience of the Self.

यावन्न सज्जते सोऽयं
विचारेऽहंकृतित्यजन् ।
परं वा शरणं याति
तावन्नायं विमुच्यते ॥

இவன் எதுவரை அகங்காரத்தைத் தியாகம்
செய்து விசாரத்தில் ஈடுபடாமல் அல்லது
பரன் சரணமடையாமலிருக்கிறானே அது
வரை முகதியடைவதில்லை.

*So long as This (yogi) does not engage in
Vichara by renouncing his sense of
individuality, nor takes refuge in the
Lord, he is not delivered from bondage.**

** Renouncing the sense of individuality is the
willingness to lose it as a result of the Quest.*

- 97 -

Consciousness Is All That Ever Exists

ROBERT POWELL

It must first be stated that the sense organs cannot in any way produce consciousness. They may appear to be mediating in the process, but by themselves they are totally helpless. It would be the same as saying that your computer has all by itself created a book or work of art. The sense organs are essentially mechanical entities and of a decidedly different order from consciousness. Along with all other objects they are concepts, and concepts can never give birth to consciousness — they are in a different dimension of reality. The very concept of 'concept' itself requires consciousness for its existence and expression. One might say that a concept is an expression, a modulation of consciousness, just as the waves in the ocean are a manifestation of the ocean but have no independent existence apart from it. In truth, consciousness is all that exists; it is therefore your very own Self.

All our musings are possible only through consciousness. Without it, there is nothing. Since consciousness is before anything, even the idea of nothingness can arise only in consciousness and is a pure concept therein.

There is no world without an observer observing that world. There is no object without a subject designating that object. Does the object exist in your (dreamless) sleep? No, the world is absent because there is no one to observe it. And in your dream the world is different from the world in the waking state — but both worlds need a dreamer to manifest.

The dream and the dreamer are inextricably interwoven in a process that is both beginningless and endless — the eternal play of Maya. On a deeper level, there is absolutely Nothing or, one might say, nothing but Consciousness, the Absolutely Real — our true nature. ▲

Attention Readers

The Mountain Path subscription rates will be raised from 1st January 2006.

Due to the increase in costs the annual subscription will be raised to Rs.100 for Indian subscribers and US\$20 for foreign subscribers.

A life subscription for Indian subscribers will be raised from Rs.800 to Rs.1,000 and foreign subscribers from US\$250 to US\$300.

Subscribers may apply for a life subscription at the old rates before 1st January 2006.

The magazine is also offering a special discount for readers before 1st January 2006. For regular subscribers in India there is the opportunity to receive the magazine for a three-year subscription at Rs.200. And foreign subscribers may receive a three-year subscription for US\$40.

Those in the USA may contact the Arunachala Ashrama at ashrama@arunachala.org

And those in the UK may contact Alasdair Black at dianalas2000@yahoo.co.uk

We are still trying to arrange a European agent for the magazine and will alert readers when one is available.

Prabhulinga Leelai

Gorakkar Gati

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BUTLER,
T. V. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN,
AND DAVID GODMAN

Prabhulinga Leelai is a 15th century Virasaiva work, written in Kannada and comprising 1,111 verses. It was originally composed when a Virasaiva scholar, Camarasa, was challenged to produce a work that was greater than either the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*. Shortly afterwards Camarasa had a dream in which Virabhadra, the son of Siva, asked him to write a long poem. Camarasa subsequently composed *Prabhulinga Leelai* in eleven days, after which he presented it at the court of his king, where it was approved by both the monarch and the scholars who had challenged him.

This Kannada work was translated into Tamil verse by Sivaprakasa Swamigal, an accomplished Virasaiva poet and scholar, in the seventeenth century. The Tamil version was read by Ramana Maharshi, who referred to it in his conversations with visitors on a number of occasions. Two of its verses are the source of one of Bhagavan's compositions (*Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham* verse 20), and the chapter entitled 'Gorakkar Gati', part of which is translated here, was narrated

by Bhagavan in *Crumbs from his Table* (pp. 36-39). A synopsis of the main story of this chapter – the meeting between Allama Prabhu and Gorakkar – also appears in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 334 and *At the Feet of Bhagavan*, chapter 27.

The author of the Tamil version, Sivaprakasa Swamigal, had a strong connection with Tiruvannamalai. His father, Kumaraswami Desikar, used to come to Arunachala from Kanchipuram every year for the Deepam festival. It is said that his three sons, of whom Sivaprakasa Swamigal was the eldest, were all born by the grace of Arunachala. When Sivaprakasa Swamigal grew up, he had a Guru in Tiruvannamalai – also called Sivaprakasa – whom he visited regularly. On his first *pradakshina* of Arunachala, Sivaprakasa Swamigal composed *Sonasaila Malai*, a hundred-verse poem in praise of Arunachala.

On one of his journeys around Tamil Nadu Sivaprakasa Swamigal went to Tirunelveli to meet and be taught by a pandit who was an expert on grammar. This teacher accepted him as his student after Sivaprakasa Swamigal had demonstrated his exceptional proficiency in this subject. The pandit taught him everything he knew, but when Sivaprakasa Swamigal tried to pay for this tuition, he refused, saying that he would like payment of a different sort.

This pandit had been having a bitter feud with another scholar. Sivaprakasa Swamigal's teacher said, 'Go to this man, defeat him in a contest of Tamil prosody, and as a condition of his defeat, make him prostrate to me.'

Sivaprakasa Swamigal accepted the assignment, located the rival scholar, and challenged him to compose spontaneous verses, on a specified topic that they would both pick, that had no labial sounds in them. That is to say, the verses had to be composed without any letters such as 'm' and 'p', which are sounded by putting the lips together. The scholar was unable to compose a single verse with this restriction, whereas Sivaprakasa Swamigal managed to produce thirty-one on the prescribed theme. The rival scholar accepted defeat and went to prostrate before Sivaprakasa Swamigal's grammar teacher.

Sivaprakasa Swamigal died when he was only thirty-two, but in his short lifespan he composed many Tamil works. *Prabhulinga Leelai*,

the work that the following translation comes from, chronicles the life and deeds of Allama Prabhu, a 12th century Virasaiva saint and teacher. There are two traditions regarding Allama Prabhu's life. One sees him as a manifestation of Siva Himself who came to the world to teach the path of freedom. Sivaprakasa Swamigal follows this tradition in *Prabhulinga Leelai*. The other version of his life, which is found in a fifteenth-century biography by Harihara, describes a more normal upbringing in the family of a temple drummer. Whatever the truth of the matter, there is general agreement that he was one of the most eminent saints, poets and Gurus of the Virasaiva school. More details of his life will be given in the notes to the verses.

The 'Gorakkar Gati' ('The Chapter on Gorakkar') begins with Allama Prabhu journeying towards Srisailam (called here 'Mount Paruppatam'), a major Saiva pilgrimage centre in Andhra Pradesh.

7

Just as the gentle southern breeze
caressing a grove of young trees
causes their flame-like buds to blaze forth,
He [Allama Prabhu] who is liberal in His compassion,
was wandering around,
having assumed a divine form that brought delight
to the hearts and minds of His devotees.
Beholding the broad-based Mount Paruppatam,
over which clouds laden with rain hover,
He advanced towards it.

Note: The next nineteen verses, which describe the scenery and the greatness of Mount Paruppatam, are omitted. The phrase 'such riches as these' in the next verse refers to these descriptions of Srisailam.

26

Allama, our King, He who is sweeter to us than a mother,
drew near to our holy mountain

where such riches as these abound in plenty.
He reached the place where Gorakkar dwelt,
he who, full of arrogance, rejoiced greatly in his heart
over his attainment of *kaya siddhi*.

Note: Gorakkar was a yogi who had striven hard to extend his lifespan and to make his body impervious to harm. Though the ideas espoused by Gorakkar seem to be very similar to those propounded by Goraknath, a famous north Indian yogi who lived between the sixth and ninth centuries, this Gorakkar is probably a different man.

Kaya siddhi is the attainment of being able to extend the lifespan of the body indefinitely, and to make it indestructible through magic potions and spiritual exercises.

27

Seeing the Supreme One approach, Gorakkar,
deeming Him [Allama] to be a great *siddha* like himself,
was filled with pride [in his own achievements].
Instead of falling at the feet of the Eternal One,
whose feet are full-blown lotus flowers,
he stood there, with his hands joined together.
After offering Him a seat, he began to speak:
'You who are a *jnana siddha*, come!'

28

[Gorakkar speaks:]
'Since it has been granted to me this day
to greet your glorious arrival,
on this day, for me, the sun has risen in heaven.
What is more, on this day
my eyes have attained true sight.
Truth to tell, can such a meeting be easy to attain
for those who have not performed
tapas beyond compare?

29

'All the scriptures declare that those who do not unite
with the band of devotees,
who, with the virtuous qualities as their support,
never swerve from the pure truth, can never unite
with the One who bears an eye on His forehead.
What profit can accrue, so to speak, to one
who possesses no initial capital?'

Note: This verse is saying that satsang with devotees is the initial capital that is necessary if one wants the ultimate profit – gaining union with Siva. The verse is derived from a similar idea that appears in *Tirukkural*, verse 449:

For those with no initial capital, there will be no gain; for the
king who lacks the support of wise counsellors there will be
no stability.

30

Having addressed the Supreme Guru
with pleasant remarks of this kind,
in accordance with the civilities to be offered to a guest,
he [Gorakkar] said: 'Pray tell, Great One,
who are You who come here?'
He stood in a questioning attitude,
offering praise to that fair Ocean of Grace.

31

[Allama replied:]
'One who has eradicated as alien [to himself]
the dense, fundamental illusion of egoity
and has, in full clarity, realised the Self –
such a one will be able to know Me also.
What point is there in speaking to one
who remains attached to the perishable body?'
So proclaimed He who knows *jnanis*
who have realised the truth non-dually.

Note: The implication of the idea expressed in the final sentence seems to be that Allama Prabhu can see that Gorakkar is not enlightened. The last two lines can also be translated as, ‘He who knows all *jnanis* as not different [from His own Self]’.

32

Fully convinced that his body,
composed of the five elements, was his true self,
[Gorakkar] declared:
‘He who, by the grace of the primal Lord,
has acquired *kaya siddhi*
through the use of magic pills and other methods,
will never die. This being so, death will come
to him who has not acquired them.’

33

[Allama replied:]
‘You have stated that life is the body’s life,
and that death is the death of this sack stuffed with flesh,
which is the body. It seems to me
that you think that your body is your very self.
Your perception of the body is like that of the Materialists
who do not know anything other than the body.’

Note: Allama is alluding to a group (*Sarvaka*) which maintained that only information received by the senses can be regarded as valid knowledge. These people do not therefore accept the existence of God or the existence of any state after death. Allama continues:

34

‘Sir, if the body is “I”, then why do you refer to it as “my” body?
There are people who regard clothes and gold [ornaments],
which are worn and removed,
as their possessions,
but if one ponders on this,

are there any among them
who will call any of these items “I”?
Speak!’ said Allama.

35

Gorakkar stood [his ground], and asked:
‘Since we say “I thought, I ran [and so on],”
then please explain to me what this is that is called “I”.’
The virtuous and supreme *Jnana* Guru lovingly replied:

36

‘The statement “I thought” pertains to the mental faculties only.
In the same way, the “I” will have to be identified
with the body, the sense organs and the mental faculties.
If this is true, the “I” will become many [and not one].
So, know that what you say is erroneous superimposition.’

Note: Allama uses the word *attiyasam*, which is the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit *adhyasa*. It means the transference of an attribute from one thing to another which does not really possess it.

37

[Gorakkar queried:]
‘When we say, “My life will cease,”
is there any other life apart from that life
that we can speak of?
Flawless Mountain of Pure Grace, please clarify!
He who affords us the gracious protection
of His fair and tender lotus feet replied:

38

‘We use the term “life” to describe the activity of the *prana*,
but that term is really, in its true sense, a name for the Self,
which is, in fact, entirely distinct from this *prana*.

So say those who understand the grammar of language.’
This spoke our Lord, out of true understanding,
to abolish his delusion.

39

[Allama continues:]

‘When the arcane *Vedas* proclaim that Self
is being-consciousness-bliss,
why have you ruined yourself, thinking this body to be “I”,
when it is merely a deceiving hovel of misery,
stuffed with flesh, fat, bones and skin,
which endures no longer than a lightning flash, and is gone?’

40

‘Just as a man will feel disgust if he touches
some unclean filth that lies in the street,
one who has set his heart upon gaining true liberation,
which abolishes the birth that fills him with terror,
will feel revulsion for the impure bodily form
and free himself from it.’

41

‘Like those who take medicine to cure an illness,
the great ones embrace *Sivam*,
intent upon quitting this remnant of a body.
Why do you endeavour to remain united
with this body with which you have identified?
This is like a sick person who takes medicine
in order to remain united with his disease!’

Note: This verse may be the origin of Bhagavan’s statement that was recorded by Muruganar as verse 233 of *Guru Vachaka Kovai*:

People devoid of worth, who dwell in the poisonous ego, the
ignorance that persists as the source of every deadly ailment,

will tirelessly perform *tapas* to strengthen the physical body.
They are like those who take a powerful medicine to intensify
their disease.

Bhagavan expressed similar views in *Day by Day with Bhagavan* (18th January, 1946) when conversation in the hall turned to the various concoctions (*kaya kalpas*) that were used by those who wanted to prolong their lives:

The talk turned to various recipes suggested by various people about *kaya kalpa*. Bhagavan mentioned a few *kalpas* based on camphor, a hundred year old neem tree, etc., and said, ‘Who would care to take such trouble over this body? As explained in books, the greatest malady we have is the body, the ‘disease of birth’, and if one takes medicines to strengthen it and prolong its life, it is like a man taking medicine to strengthen and perpetuate his disease. As the body is a burden we bear, we should on the other hand feel like a cooly engaged to carry a load, anxiously looking forward to arrival at the destination when he can throw off his burden.

42

‘Was there ever a body born that was able to avoid death?
If you throw a stone into the sky,
is there any possibility that it will not fall back down?
Effects, however significant and enduring, will pass away.
But that which does not undergo death,
and is known as the Cause, that endures always.’

43

‘All your plans to render your body immortal
through the use of potions will accomplish nothing
other than prolonging the span of your bodily existence.

Your statement that the body is indestructible is untenable.
It is not proper that you should thus assert
that your body is indestructible.
You whose penances are great, at least, henceforth,
seek only liberation,' said the Lord.

44

[Gorakkar replied:]
'Irrespective of what you say, my body cannot ever be destroyed.
Why argue the matter? This very day shall I,
by the grace of the Primal Lord, demonstrate my power.'
Having thus addressed the faultless Ocean of Grace,
Gorakkar did the following:

45

Handing to our Lord a shining sword, sharp and true,
like the powerful weapon that Indra held
when he clove the mountains
where the sweet music of babbling streams resounds,
he declared:
'I being what I am, pray, hurl this at me
with all the strength of your mighty shoulders!'

Note: There is a puranic story that recounts how mountains once had the ability to fly. Unfortunately, they generally caused a huge amount of damage whenever they tried to land anywhere. To stop this unnecessary destruction, Indra used his *vajra*, a weapon with two blades that were perpendicular to a short handle that was grasped in the hand, to sever the wings of the mountains and maroon them permanently on the ground.

46

Standing before him, inflated with pride,
he [Gorakkar] cried, 'Sire, if so much as a sliver of skin,
no thicker than a fly's wing,

is cut away, then I am no *siddha!*'
Allama graciously decided,
'I will do exactly as this man
who thinks himself immortal
desires, and banish the deep pride
that he stores up in his heart.'

47

That Rain of Grace took the sword.
Wielding it with the swiftness of lightning,
he raised it on high
and brought it down on [Gorakkar's] body
with a din that was like a thunderbolt in the heavens.
It was as if he had struck a great and enduring mountain.
A great noise rose up, reverberating throughout the sky.

48

The holy Mountain Paruppatam trembled!
The daughter of Himavan,
filled with a terror impossible to describe,
thought to her herself, 'The demon [Ravana] has come,
it would seem, and in his powerful fury,
has [tried] this day to lift up this [Mount Paruppatam] also!'
and went rushing into the arms of Lord Siva.

Note: This is a reference to a story in which the demon Ravana went to Mount Kailash and lifted it up. The 'daughter of Himavan' is Parvati, the consort of Siva.

49

Just as the *asuna* bird that listens to the sound of lutes
played by *vidhyadhara* damsels
will faint on hearing the drumbeat
of the great hunter women with five-fold plaits,
so all the people of the world grew weak in their hearts.

Sleeping beasts jumped to their feet and ran away.
Birds rose up in flocks, and rain poured down.

Note: The *vidhyadhara* damsels are celestial musicians. The *asuna* bird is a mythical creature that is highly sensitive to music. When it becomes fascinated by notes and harmonies, a sudden loud beat of the drum causes its instantaneous death.

50

As [Gorakkar] stood there without a scratch upon his body
while this thunderous noise rose on high,
Allama realised that the pride he had exhibited before
had now tripled its former proportions,
[making him] full of admiration for himself,
convinced in his heart that no man was his equal.

51

Clapping his hands together [Allama] exclaimed:
'In this world, where the wind wanders free,
there is no one equal to you,
you who have attained a physical form so strong
that it can produce such a sound!'
Then, with a derisive smile,
He [Allama] proffered him the sword that He held
in the lotus flower of His hand.

52

'Wielding this sword you hold with all your strength,
and that of all your followers, attempt to strike Me,'
said our Lord, remaining where He stood.
The *siddha* in turn fearlessly raised the sword
and smote the form of Him who is beyond compare.

53

The sword did not affect that matchless body,
but passed harmlessly through it.
It was as if it had sliced through a ray of sunlight,
which is more subtle than an atom.
Is it possible for a sword to touch
that cool and fragrant Supreme Light,
which the never-sagging breasts of Maya,
whose arms are more slender than bamboo,
could not embrace?

Note: In the version of Allama's life that holds him to be a manifestation of Siva, Allama is not physically born. He instead appears as a baby by the side of a couple who had been doing *tapas* to gain a 'truth-bringing, sorrowless' son. When he grew up, he became a drummer in the local temple. He eventually became the dancing teacher of Maya, whom Parvati had sent to tempt him.

Bhagavan has narrated the incident that the end of this verse refers to in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 334:

Bhagavan: There was a dialogue between Siva and Parvati in Kailas. Siva said that Allama was one who would not be affected by her blandishments. Parvati wanted to try it and so sent her tamasic quality to incarnate as a king's daughter on the earth in order that she might entice Allama. She grew up as a highly accomplished girl. She used to sing in the temple. Allama used to go there and play on the drum. She lost herself in the play of the drum. She fell in love with him. They met in her bedroom. When she embraced him he became intangible. She grew lovesick. But a celestial damsel was sent to remind her of her purpose on the earth. She resolved to overthrow Allama but did not succeed. Finally she went up to Kailas. Then Parvati sent her sattvic quality who was born as a brahmin *sannyasini*. When she surrendered to Allama she realised his true greatness.

54

Striking empty space, Gorakkar's arms grew weak
and he was filled with wonder for the Lord.
'The Supreme Light that I worship is truly He!' he cried,
his body perspiring as he quaked with fear.
Abandoning the pride he had entertained,
he began to follow the true path of pure love.
After prostrating himself at the feet of our King,
which are luxuriant lotus flowers, filled with nectar,
he rose to his feet and began to speak:

55

'Not recognising Your [true nature], like one intoxicated,
with pride in my heart, I contemplated evil deeds.
Later I stood before You, and contradicted You,
babbling wicked nonsense like a madman.
Like a hunter who kills and snatches away dear life,
I have committed all these sins.
Father, out of your great and enduring grace,
may You cleanse me of all of them
and be my gracious Master.'

56

That great Flood of Compassion declared:
'If, setting aside your former misdeeds,
you cease henceforth from your erring ways,
free yourself from attachment to the body,
and come to understand your own true nature,
you will be delightful to Me.'
[Gorakkar replied:]
'You who feed me the rare ambrosia of heaven,
pardoning and destroying the faults
that render salvation unattainable for me!
You who are a pure and radiant jewel!
What might I offer you in recompense?'

57

'Show me the full measure of your compassion,
and reveal to me the true reality that I desire,
that I may fully know it.'
Thus replied Gorakkar, who stood there, free of desire
for the body to which he had clung.
The Radiant Supreme, who cannot be known
by knowledge gained from mere learning,
realising his spiritual maturity,
felt compassion for him.
His [Allama's] holy heart, which had attained
to the state of the divine, filled with joy.
'Listen with devotion,' He said:

58

'If you come to know *Gubesan* [The Lord of the Cave]
as He really is,
the disease of birth will be ended for you,
and you will, as is fit, experience supreme bliss,'
said He who is without blemish.
[Gorakkar] replied: 'Praise be to You, my Father!
Show me Your loving compassion, and explain
the true meaning of the word *Gubesan*.
Show me Your grace that I may know
and fully comprehend who it is
that is designated by that name.'
With [Gorakkar] paying homage, our Lord replied:

59

'Note well the meaning [of this word]:
The cave [*guhāi*] is the Heart,
and the one who dwells within it is *Isan*, the Lord.
I Myself am the one who is implied
by the word *Gubesan*.'

Thus declared the Flawless One.
 At this the *siddha* rejoiced in his heart,
 and his face lit up as he asked:
 ‘If You are [the Lord], then why in Your hand,
 that is like a tender blossoming lotus flower,
 do You hold a Siva *lingam*? Please explain.’

60

‘Desiring that the inhabitants of the world,
 in order to reap the fruit of this birth,
 should unwaveringly perform *puja*
 with flowers in their hands to the revered Siva *lingam*,
 I always hold in my hand this emblem
 that represents My all-embracing form,
 never letting go of it. Let your mind
 be clear in the knowledge of this.’
 Thus did the God and Guru speak,
 vouchsafing His grace.

Note: Though Allama here describes the significance of the *lingam* that is attached to his hand, he does not go into the details of how the *lingam* came to be there in the first place.

In the version of Allama Prabhu’s life that gives him earthly parents, he fell in love with a girl called Kamalate, whose name means ‘the tendril of love’. However, Kamalate was struck down with a fever, from which she subsequently died. Allama Prabhu took to wandering around, mad with grief. After losing his memory of who he was and where he had come from, he went from village to village calling out the name of Kamalate. While he was sitting in a grove of trees, lost in his grief, he idly scratched the ground with his toes and noticed the pinnacle of a buried temple just under the ground. He had the place excavated and eventually found a closed door in front of what appeared to be the main shrine. He kicked down the door and went in. Sitting before him was a yogi in an open-eyed trance; the focus of his gaze

appeared to be the *lingam* in the shrine. The yogi, whose name was Animisayya, was glowing with an inner light. The name Animisayya means the ‘open-eyed one’, or ‘the one without eyelids’. While Allama was standing there astonished, Animisayya put a *lingam* into his hand. As he handed over the *lingam*, Animisayya’s life force left him and went into Allama Prabhu. In that moment of transference, Allama Prabhu became enlightened. For the remainder of his life he wandered around wherever the Lord called him to go.

The phrase ‘Lord of the Cave’ (*Gubhesan*) is one that appears in almost all of Allama’s *vacanas*, his mystical poems. It seems to be his favourite epithet for the transcendent reality.

It has been conjectured that this phrase may also be a reference to this underground yogi who became his Guru and enlightened him.

In the version of Allama Prabhu’s life that claims that he is a manifestation of Siva, he discovers the underground shrine and meets the yogi who is meditating there. The *lingam* jumps from the yogi’s hands into Allama Prabhu’s palm, where it sticks and remains for the rest of his life. Since Allama Prabhu, in this version, is Siva Himself, there is no question of any transference of power.

61

‘In accordance with the injunction
 solemnly enjoined upon us
 by the *Vedas* and all the other holy books,
 that a guru and teacher should always
 engage in the performance of good works,
 he who has the ability to subdue the power
 of the fetter [of bondage] in the aspirant, the mature seeker,
 should only abandon the performance of good deeds
 when his body dies, and not before.’

62

Having thus revealed His own nature,
 the Lord said: ‘In the same way that you once remained

with the firm conviction 'I am the body',
 if, having known Myself who stand here,
 you now become established in the conviction
 'I am He' [*soham bhavana*],
 your state of ignorance will disappear
 just as deadly cobra poison
 can be rendered ineffective
 by dwelling upon the thought of Garuda.

Note: Garuda, the divine eagle, is a mortal enemy of the cobra. In the same way that the mere thought of this bird is supposed to render cobra venom harmless, the conviction 'I am He' will counteract the insidious poison of the 'I am the body' idea.

The ideas in verses fifty-nine and sixty-two were taken by Bhagavan and rewritten in a Tamil verse that eventually appeared as verse twenty of *Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham*:

The Lord who shines within the cave that is the Lotus of the Heart is worshipped as *Guhesan* [Lord of the Cave]. If, by strength of daily practice, the conviction 'I am *Guhesan*', in other words, 'I am He', becomes as firm as the [present] identification of the 'I' with the body, and you [thereby] remain established as that Lord, the ignorance that takes the perishable body to be oneself will vanish like darkness before the golden sun.

Allama Prabhu's meeting with Gorakkar was also recorded in a work entitled *Sunyasampadane* (*The Achievement of Nothingness*). There, after Gorakkar has conceded defeat, Allama Prabhu says:

With your alchemies
 you achieve metals but no essence.
 With all your manifold yogas
 you achieve a body but no spirit.
 With your speeches and arguments

you build chains of words
 but cannot define the spirit.¹

63

Having fully realised the meaning of the words spoken to him, out of His grace, by the supreme *Jnana* Guru, Gorakkar abandoned the idea that his body was his true form, realised the true reality, giving up everything that was other than that truth, and attained the Self, banishing [even] the deluded notion 'I am That'. Becoming the Self, he remained in that place enjoying praise that even the Gods cannot know.

Note: The phrase 'I am That' could also be translated as 'I am realised'. It probably means that Gorakkar moved on from the inner conviction 'I am That' to the final concept-free experience in which there is no longer an 'I' that can claim liberation or enlightenment. ▲

¹*Sunyasampadane*, ed. S. S. Bhoosnurmath, pub. Dharwar 1958, p. 449, cited in *Speaking of Siva* by A. K. Ramanujan, pub. Penguin 1985, p. 147.



BOOK EXCERPT

The Purusha Principle of Yoga

DAVID FRAWLEY

Imagine for a moment — as in the Isaac Asimov movie and science fiction novel *Fantastic Voyage* — that you are reduced in size to a minuscule level, placed inside a human body in a microscopic vessel and begin to travel through it. You would see blood and fluid, perhaps noting larger tissues and organs. You might consider that a blood vessel was simply a river or that the cells in the body were creatures in their own right, with tissues and organs as lands and mountains. Confronted by the diversity of forms inside the organism, you would not perceive the overall organism. You would not even imagine that these apparently different entities were part of a single person with its own consciousness who could travel at will, carrying them along as part of his own greater individuality.

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We are in the same position as individuals in the conscious universe. We do not perceive the *greater* cosmic being but only the smaller objects or entities within it, the forms and creatures of our external environment. As creatures ourselves, we look at the universe from the inside like mere cells *in a greater* organism. We miss the overall being, the Divinity that exists at a vaster level than all we perceive. We exaggerate our own independence and importance, thinking that we are real in our own rights rather than just small parts of a totality that extends far beyond us.

However, those who live in harmony with nature, from animals to tribal peoples, to those who practice deep meditation, are aware that they are part of a greater cosmic organism, that they are cells in the body of God. In this regard they have much to teach us about the real structure of the universe, in which everything is part of a greater whole that is alive and aware.

Man and the Universe or Man as the Universe

Western civilization has generally looked upon the human being as existing apart from nature, with nature existing mainly for our own benefit. Western science regards humans as the only real intelligent life form on the planet. Its model of intelligent life on other worlds consists of technologically developed humanoids like us. It sees little wrong with disrupting or damaging nature as long as some progress for our species may come of it.

Dominant western religions have generally portrayed the human being as God's chosen creature, the pinnacle of nature, given dominion over all the Earth. They view the soul as belonging only to humans and not to animals or plants, which do not possess any capacity for salvation or eternal life. While notable exceptions can be found in both science and religion — and while true science and religion may stand apart from them — such anthropocentric beliefs have created the main thrust of our current civilization.

Our social and political orders follow the same impetus. For our urban development we are willing to eliminate not only individual species that are a nuisance to us, but entire ecosystems that may get in our way. We lay waste to the resources of the planet, both living and

non-living, as if all planetary rights belonged to our species alone. However carelessly we act, we seem to regard ourselves as the only real feeling entity in the world. Nature just provides the raw material for our human projects — rocks that yield minerals, trees that are a source of wood, animals for food and so on. Other creatures seldom count, being fit for whatever purpose we deem convenient.

This predominant thrust of western civilization, and modern civilization based upon it, can be defined according to the image of 'man against nature'. The result of this civilization is the growing devastation of our planet. We are proud of our material progress and forget that it has occurred only at the expense of numerous other creatures, great and small. We have created a culture of exploitation in which not only plants and animals but also human beings are quickly consumed and discarded.

On the other hand, in Eastern and native traditions, the human being is often presented as an insignificant part of the greater universe that could probably do well enough without us. The human is merely another creature, one among many in the boundless universe, like the small figure of a man placed in a vast panorama of a Chinese landscape painting. Nature is the reality and we humans are at best a small part of nature, at worst something unnatural and out of place in a universe that transcends our creaturely arrogance. This is the image of 'nature transcending man'. While this view is closer to the truth, there is an important evolutionary potential for our species that we should not overlook while recognizing it.

A third view exists that can integrate humanity and nature in a way that affords greater meaning to both. There is an underlying unity of the human being and the universe, not simply relative to material factors, but in terms of consciousness itself. The human being at a soul level reflects the entire universe, while the universe itself is the Supreme Person or conscious being. It is not an issue of man ruling over nature or nature ruling over man. The same Self and sense of personhood underlies both the human being and the *greater* universe. We are the world, not in our current limited state of mind but in our true nature and higher potential for enlightenment.

The Cosmic Person of Consciousness and Light

One could say that the essence of our humanity is that we are ‘sentient’ beings, conscious entities possessed of feelings and capable of suffering. We cannot accept that human beings are enslaved, experimented on, used for food, killed or tortured or any other such demeaning actions that we might allow for animals. It offends our sensibilities when we see a human being treated as a mere thing or ‘object’. We respect our dignity and inviolability as a conscious ‘subject’. This is because we recognize existence of a consciousness principle in the human person.

We see the human as an independent being, possessing free will and entitled to his or her own life and happiness. We feel that humans should be treated fairly and allowed to live as they see fit, which we refer to as ‘human rights’ in our various law codes. There is nothing inherently wrong with this line of thought except that it does not go far enough. Our mistake is thinking that such a consciousness principle and the rights that go along with it are unique to our species and do not belong to the rest of the universe.

Consciousness is not something that our species owns. It is as universal as light. Some form of consciousness or feeling exists in all beings down to the rocks. However, once we recognize the all-pervasive nature of consciousness then we must treat all creatures ‘humanely’ with a similar care and regard that we would afford a fellow human being. The same consciousness principle that makes us feel human is a universal principle that fills the world with light and allows other creatures to live and move as well.

The universe itself is a person, though without the limitations and prejudices of our human personality. This is what the science of Yoga calls the ‘Purusha’. The Purusha, meaning a person or conscious being, is a Sanskrit term for the Cosmic Being behind the universe, the spirit within all things. The entire universe is a manifestation of the Cosmic Person. This Cosmic Person endows every creature with personhood or a sense of self, not only humans but also animals and ultimately all of nature.

The goal of classical Yoga — as defined in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, the prime ancient textbook of Yoga — is the realization of the Purusha

or cosmic being as our true Self.¹ This is a different definition than most people today consider, with the physical image of yoga that has become popular in our culture, but it is the actual foundation of the Yoga tradition. The Purusha or true Self is the ultimate goal of all Vedic practices and all Vedantic philosophy, examination and inquiry. Yoga is a path of Self-realization in the deeper sense of this Cosmic Self, not simply knowing our human self but realizing the entire universe within our own minds and hearts.² Our true Self is the universal Self or Purusha that exists within all nature.³ The *greater* concern of Yoga practice is uniting our limited consciousness with the unbounded infinite awareness that is the Self of all.

This yogic view of the Self is very different than usual views that emphasize the bodily self, the psychological self, or the religious soul as our true nature. Our ordinary view of the bodily self is of an entity that is born and dies along with the body and is as separate from the world as our flesh is from the ground. Our view of the psychological self is of an entity created by our personal history during this physical life. It has the unique characteristics of our upbringing and education along with the particular capacities that we develop through our own efforts, making us different than every other person. Our usual religious view of the soul is of an entity created by God, dependent upon the body and its resurrection, which can perhaps commune with God in some heavenly world but retains its separate identity and cannot become one with that supreme Reality.

In the yogic view, our true individuality is an inner consciousness that unites us with all — not a physical, mental or religious entity that keeps us apart. Our self is mirrored in all the selves in the universe. If

¹ *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* I.3.

² Yoga philosophy, based upon Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*, is one of the six schools of Vedic philosophy that accepts the authority and insights of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*.

³ The philosophy that the Self is the supreme reality is called ‘Vedanta’ and is the culmination of Vedic thought. There are many modern and ancient books on this teaching from the *Vedas* to the works of modern sages like Vivekananda or Ramana Maharshi.

we look deeply, we can see that everything in the universe has a personality or spirit within it, whether it is the Sun, the mountains, animals or human beings. Every form in nature from the rocks to the clouds is a face of Consciousness. All faces of all creatures, we could say, are masks of God.

This Cosmic Person exists in an embodied form as the soul within all creatures. We could say that plants and animals are evolutionary precursors of human beings or younger forms of ourselves, people in the making as it were. The Cosmic Person also exists in disembodied forms as the spirit behind the forces of nature. We could say that the Sun and Moon are cosmic, older or vaster forms of ourselves — spiritual powers and personalities. The whole universe is the cosmic human being taking many different appearances and assuming many different functions both individually and collectively as part of its manifold expression.

This view was known to the sages of the *Rig Veda*, in which the teaching of the Purusha first arose:

The Cosmic Person (Purusha) is all this, what has been and what will be.

From his mind, the Moon was born, from his eye came the Sun. From his mouth arose the powers of fire and lightning. From the wind his breath was born.

From his navel came the atmosphere, from his head Heaven, from his feet the Earth and from his ears, the directions of space. Thus all the worlds were formed.⁴

The human being is a replica of the greater universe, which itself has an organic structure like the human body. We are an expression of the ‘self-conscious universe’ holding both spirit and nature within ourselves. This means that we exist in all things, not as a separate species but as part of the underlying fabric of awareness. Through the unity of consciousness, the human being is the universe and the universe is a human being. We could say that the material universe is the body of consciousness, while consciousness is the soul of the world.

⁴ *Rig Veda* X. 90, 2, 12, 14.

This Cosmic Person is both man and woman, the Great God and the Great Goddess, both the cosmic masculine and cosmic feminine powers. It is not simply the essence of humanity but the prototype for plants, animals, stars and planets. The Cosmic Person is the universal form, the prime archetype behind all beings, the ‘I behind the I’ in all creatures.

This Purusha or consciousness principle of Yoga, however, is no mere philosophical concept, theological belief or abstract Absolute. It is the very fire within our hearts that is the light of the entire universe. The Purusha is Jyotirmaya or ‘made of light’. To truly practise Yoga we must begin with an understanding of this being of light as our goal. However, few Yoga students today are aware of the Purusha, much less its connection to fire, though that has always been the key to the inner process and higher experience of Yoga. Most meditators aim at understanding the psychological self, not realizing that our true Self is the cosmic light expressing itself in all of nature, in which our personal psychology gets consumed as an offering in but an instant.

The Human Being as Creator Awakening in his Cosmic Creation

The *Vedas* tell us that plants have feelings and animals have minds.⁵ Other creatures are also aware. They want to live and experience happiness just as we do. But we humans do have an additional capacity of intelligence that affords us a better potential to know the Reality or Self behind the universe, should we choose to look for it.

Through the human being, the Creator can become consciousness in his own creation. God, the Creator is seeking to manifest through us, so that he can know his own creation from within, with the very *creature* realizing “I am all” and “I have become this entire universe.”

The Self alone was there in the beginning. There was nothing else that winked. He thought, “I will create the worlds.”

Having created the worlds, he thought, “How can this universe exist without me? How shall I enter into it?”

⁵ This point is discussed in the ancient *Aitareya Aranyaka* II.3.1, connected to the *Upanishad* of the same name.

Having opened the top of the skull and through that means he entered it. He saw the Person (Purusha) as God (Brahman).⁶

The human being is meant to serve as a vehicle for the entire universe to become self-aware. We are the instruments for God to perceive his creation through the eyes of his creatures. This is the great fulfillment that cosmic intelligence has planned through the long evolutionary struggle. The whole purpose of the evolution of the soul, which is also the evolution of life, is the soul's creation of a body through which it can realize God or the universal consciousness. This is achieved with the human body, through which we can practise meditation and find God within ourselves.

We are all sons and daughters of God. We are created in the image of God, which is as a power of light and consciousness! We are all meant to become God who is our origin and our home. That Divine Being dwells within us as our true Self, calling us to remember our greater nature as All.

The ancients referred to this Cosmic Person as the 'Person in the Sun'⁷ as well as the 'Sun of suns' and the 'God of gods', meaning the consciousness principle inherent in light. The main dwelling for God in the external world is the Sun as the source of light and life. Similarly, God dwells within us as the soul, the source of life and feeling within our hearts, our inner Sun:

The Cosmic Person, the size of a thumb, dwells in the middle of the heart like a flame without smoke. He is the lord of what was and what will be. He is today and he is tomorrow. All this is That!⁸

Our soul is this 'fire person' or being of light in the heart. This is what gives us individuality, character, vitality and creativity. The fire person within us reflects the Cosmic Person of pure light in the Sun and stars.

The human being, therefore, is a link creature between the animal and the god or cosmic being. It is the creature in whom the

evolutionary fire is meant to come forth and connect itself with the universal light. Our inner imperative is to become one with the entire universe. We are not meant to rule over the world from the outside. Our task is to embrace the creation from within, according to the supreme power of love that is its true motivating force.

Yet we must remember that this special evolutionary position is not so much a privilege as a duty. To honour it, we must sacrifice our personal desires to the greater universal will. We must recognize the Cosmic Person as our real being and view all creatures as portions of our *greater* selves. This means to go beyond any mere bodily or mental definition of self.

The Great Equation Revisited

We can extend our original equation of light and consciousness:

Light = Perception = Consciousness = Human Being = Soul = Cosmic Person.

The human being is meant to be a being of light. Our human head is like the Sun projecting the light of consciousness through its openings of the eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Our human heart is like an inner Sun projecting the light-blood of life throughout the veins and arteries of our bodies. Our true humanity is found not in the body, in our genes or in our social behaviour but in the light of our soul that can feel oneness with all. Once we are liberated from a merely outward sense of self, our awareness will be as free and radiant as the Sun in the sky.

We are meant to be a walking, breathing, talking form of the entire universe, each one of us with the vastness of a solar system or a galaxy! We haven't even suspected the great glory and beauty that we can project into the world. The universal being is meant to come to the front and awaken through us, seeing with our eyes, feeling with our hearts and thinking with our minds, remembering its journey from the stars to the Earth and through the entire domain of nature on this planet.

Our true humanity, therefore, does not reside in our mere humanity. Our humanness is a reflection of a Cosmic Person who pervades the entire world. Our true humanity resides in this Cosmic Human Being

⁶ *Aitareya Upanishad* I.1.1; III. 11,12,13.

⁷ *Isha Upanishad* 6, 7.

⁸ *Katha Upanishad* 4.13.

who cares for the entire universe as his own self. Our highest potential is not merely the scientific or social advancement of our species, but making our species the matrix for the universal being in its advent on Earth.

To realize this higher potential we must give up the arrogance of our species that has not only harmed our planet but also crippled our own inner creativity and awareness. We must honour that same conscious being in all nature from the stars to rocks, plants and animals. We must learn to see our Self in all beings and all beings in the Self as the *Upanishads* said so eloquently thousands of years ago:

He who sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self henceforth has no fear.

*Where can there be any delusion or sorrow in whom all beings have become himself, for the knowing one who sees only unity?*⁹

We must recognize the human face in the Sun, Moon, mountains and clouds. We must greet the Sun as our Father and the Earth as our Mother, with all the plants and animals as our brothers and sisters. We must recognize that whatever we look at also looks back at us with our own eyes, which are the eyes of our own soul and the eyes of God. Can you see your own face in every form of nature? It is only then that you will really see and all eyes will be yours. ▲

⁹ *Isha Upanishad* 6-7.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH: Pub: Vimal Prakashan Trust, Bodakdev, Ahmedabad 380015. pp. 24; Rs. not stated.

AN INDIAN QUEST FOR DEMOCRACY: Pub: J. Doshi, 28, Indus Court, A Rd., Churchgate, Mumbai 400020. pp. 51; Rs. not stated.

Both booklets by Vimla Thakar

‘The seeds of revolution are sown in the emptiness of inner space’. Smt. Thakar defines sustainable peace as a ‘justice based economy, value based education, agro based industrialization’, and the village and not isolated individuality as the organic vote in democracy. The second booklet presents ‘considered views and suggestions of persons of integrity’.

Timely thoughts of a person deeply concerned with current global consciousness. J. Jayaraman

NEW LIVES: 50 WESTERNERS SEARCH FOR THEMSELVES IN SACRED INDIA by Malcolm Tillis with editing and introduction by Ram Alexander. Pub: Indica Books, 2004, D40-18 Godowlia, Varanasi, UP 221001, pp. 454, Rs. 425.

With the author we wander the length and breadth of India in search of other Westerners who, like him, have forsaken their old lives in the West, left their homelands, and come to seek out a more meaningful life in spiritual India. Seeing Indian spirituality through the eyes of outsiders not born into the ancient culture engenders a freshness and appreciation for the spiritual wealth of India which many might otherwise take for granted. These interviews conducted in the early 1980s include Swami Jnanananda, a Swiss Hindu monk living among yogis in the Himalayas, Swami Vijayananda and Brahmacharini Atmananda, long time devotees of

Ananda Mayi Ma, Russell Balfour Clarke, English teacher of the young J. Krishnamurthi, Father Bede Griffiths, prior of Shantivanam Ashram, Jean Dunn, Nisargadatta Maharaj's devoted student and editor, as well as a number established Ramana Maharshi devotees such as Lucy Cornelssen, Lucia Osborne, Hamsa Johannus de Reade, and David Godman. The author has his own story to tell during his whirlwind book research tour of India. Readable and inspiring, this volume is an insightful glimpse of Ashram life in India two decades ago and spans various lineages and traditions.

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Peter Pichelmann.

Books Received

THE INNER GUIDE MEDITATION: A SPIRITUAL TECHNOLOGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY by Edwin C. Steinbrecher, New Age Books, 2002, A-44 Naraina Phase 1, New Delhi, 110 028, Email: nab@vsnl.in pp. 284.

MAHARSHI RAMANA'S UPADESHA SARAM: A STUDY by L. B. Ahuja and B. G. R. Rao. Pub: Anitha Enterprises, 1999, No. 27, I Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore, 560 003, tel: 080 336 72 36, pp. 122.

THE ART OF SELF ENQUIRY by Dr. P. V. S. Suryanarayana Raju. Pub: Dr. P. V. S. Suryanarayana Raju, 2002, Syamala Children Hospital, D. No. 5-8-16, Park Street, Narasapur – 534 275, W.G. Dist., A.P., tel: 08814 - 73430, pp. 60.

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RAMANA MAHARSHI by Mamillapalli Narasimham. Pub: Sri Gopal Publications, 2001, Opp. Lane to Arya Samaj, Kacheguda, Hyderabad- 500 027, pp. 166, Rs. 50.

RAJAYOGI SRI KARIM PEER SWAMIJI by S. Balasubramanian. Pub: Sri Nityananda Ashrama, 2002, Foot of Chamundi Hills, Mysore,

RAMANA KID'S CORNER

Dear Children of Bhagavan,
Hope you all are doing well by Bhagavan's grace. This time at *Ramana Kids Corner*, we get to listen to a beautiful story & work out a maze. Don't forget to stay in touch with us by sending your contributions to ramanakids@yahoo.com



I Saw Bhagavan When I Was A Child...

There are many inspiring accounts of devotees who have seen Bhagavan. Here is a report from a devotee, who has been blessed by spending a good portion of his childhood under the watchful, loving eyes of Bhagavan. Let us listen to President Thatha (Sri V.S. Ramanan) share with utmost devotion this incident from his childhood:

“When I was a young boy of around 10 years old, I clearly remember witnessing this incident. Once, in the dining hall, a person serving food accidentally spilled sambar (liquid) on the floor, near Bhagavan's leaf. Bhagavan immediately scooped all of the sambar with his hands onto His leaf. Those days, the floors were not as clean and smooth as it is today. The sambar must have had even some sand mixed with it. However Bhagavan did not let even a drop of sambar remain on the floor. Bhagavan then consumed each and every drop of the sambar! Everybody in the dining hall was stunned. Later, after Bhagavan had left, Chinnaswami (Bhagavan's brother) rebuked the person who had spilled the sambar, for the inconvenience caused to Bhagavan due to the careless spilling.”

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

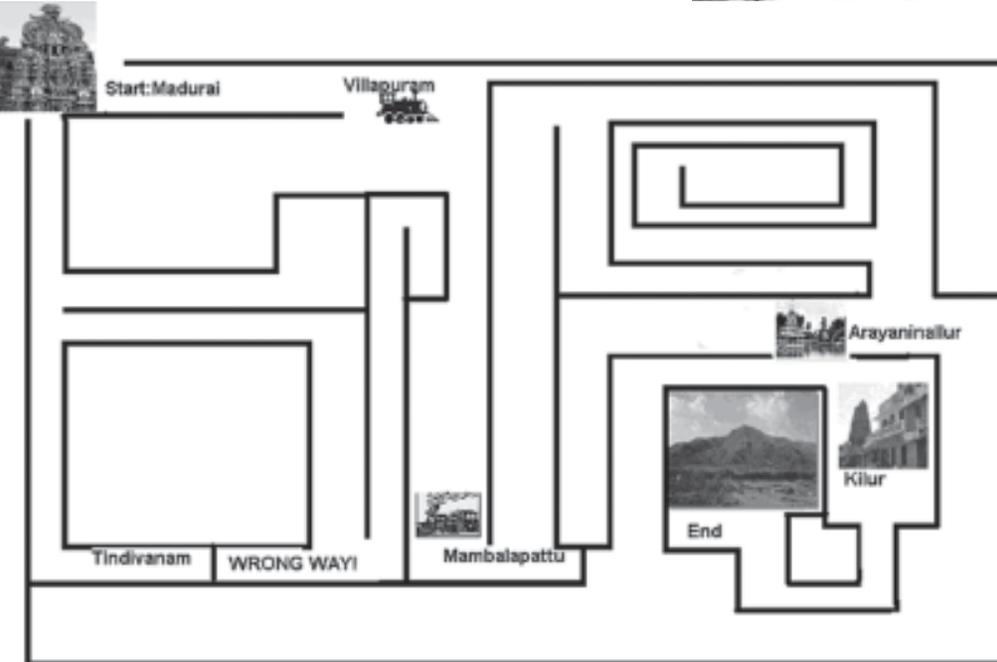
Activity

Arunachala Paati: Thank you, President Thatha, for sharing this with us. Children, I would like to suggest an activity: Each of you, think of ways to reduce waste. If you are 5 years old, think of 5 ways to reduce waste. Imagine me — I have to come up with 99 ways to reduce waste!

They don't have to be big ideas, just simple ways like using less water to wash your hands, not wasting paper, not wasting time, you get it, right...? I know you can think of superb ways to follow Bhagavan's example, everyday!

The Advent Maze

Young Bhagavan left home from Madurai to come to Arunachala. In the maze below, trace the path young Bhagavan took on this momentous journey!



Hint: Read "Bhagavan Sri Ramana: A Pictorial Biography"



Aradhana Celebrations

Dr. M. Anantanarayana Rao once reported the following scene:

“At the end of May 1949, Sri T. P. Ramachandran and Dr. Padmanabhan went into the temple hall where Sri Bhagavan was sitting. It was fairly late in the evening and the writer also went there for some work he had to do. The two devotees went behind the stone sofa on which Sri Bhagavan was sitting. There they were sobbing as they had come to know that the tumour on Sri Bhagavan’s arm was a type of cancer. Sri Bhagavan called them and asked them why they were weeping. When they gave the reason Sri Bhagavan said, ‘Where can I go? Where is it possible for me to go?’”¹

Sri Bhagavan’s fifty-fifth Aradhana was celebrated in the Samadhi Hall on May 6th. In the early morning hours hymns on and by Sri Bhagavan were sung before his shrine followed by milk puja, breakfast, and simultaneous performance of *Ekadasa Rudra Mahanyasa*. Priests and guest priests, more than 15 in total, were on hand to recite *Taittiriya* and *Mahanarayana Upanishads*. Puja followed and the final arati was around 11 am. Lunch was served in the pandal outside the dining hall where all were invited. Some 1500 people, devotees and locals, enjoyed Bhagavan’s prasada. Evening music was by Ramananjali.

Chennai and Other Kendras

The 55th Aradhana celebrations had an extensive programme beginning April 30th right up to the 6th of May. There was daily devotional music programmes and talks on Bhagavan’s teachings. The highlight was a series of talks by Nochur Sri Venkataraman on *Arunachala Pancha Ratnam* during the mornings and *Hrudhaya Vidhya* in the evenings. Talks were well attended and appreciated.

Ramana Mandiram, Madurai, also celebrated Sri Bhagavan’s Aradhana as did other Ramana Kendras. In Madurai the event was commemorated with the Mandiram’s usual devotion-filled programme attended by devotees from the city and nearby areas.

125th Jayanti Celebration

Bhagavan’s 125th Jayanti year continues to be celebrated. On March 26th devotees and dignitaries gathered in Chennai at MOP Vaishnav College for Women. Jointly organized by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, and Ramana Kendra, Chennai, Ashram President Sri V. S. Ramanan was

¹ *Surpassing Love*, 167.



on hand to offer the welcome address. Swami Gautamananda, President of Ramakrishna Mission, Chennai, released books on the life and teachings of Bhagavan. Professor Prema Pandurang spoke as did former Chief Vigilance Commissioner, Sri N.Vittal. Devotees heard from Sri Ram Mohan, editor of *Ramanodhayam* and Swami Mitrananda, Chinmaya Mission, Chennai. Speakers emphasized the role of great saints such as Bhagavan Ramana and the importance of inner seeking. The celebration concluded with a classical music programme in the evening by Smt. Gayathri Girish, Sri V. Sanjeev and Sri Manoj Siva.

Agni Nakshatra

The year’s summer season started gently with unseasonable rains in early April, raising hopes of a repeat of last year’s unusually moderate hot season. Temperatures soared during *agni nakshatra* (fire star) in the month of May with a heat wave in South India. At the end of the *agni nakshatra* period Sri Ramanasramam was visited by thunderstorms replete with lightning and hail. Very little rainwater collected but it was enough to cool the area and bring a generous conclusion to an otherwise warm and dry summer.



Summiting Arunachala

The district revenue administration and the forestry department have jointly appealed to the public not to climb the summit of Arunachala Mountain in order to protect the 50,000 trees planted over 120 acres on the mountain under the afforestation programme of the Tiruvannamalai Greening Society. Forest fires last year were largely prevented by the vigil of fire prevention watchmen of the Society and other organizations. Fires at this stage of the project could have devastating consequences; hence any and every measure to safeguard the young

saplings. In order to ascend the Hill devotees must obtain prior permission from the forestry office which is near the bus stand. Ashram devotees, however, are free to continue visiting Skandashram, Virupaksha Cave and other sites on the lower reaches of the hill without a permit.

One of the consequences of the new restrictions was that Mouna Swami, the sadhu who lived continuously on Arunachala's summit for some 16 years, was shifted down on April 19th. Owing to the public outcry his forced expulsion created, special dispensation was granted and he has been allowed to return.



Mother Alagammal's Mahapuja

When Alagammal realized her son was not the boy Venkataraman but Bhagavan Sri Ramana and belonged to everyone, she told him, "When I die, even if you throw my body into a bush, I don't care, but I must die in your arms." Indeed she did breathe her last in Sri Bhagavan's arms and today the magnificent temple, *Matrubhuteswar*, testifies to the fullness of her surrender to Bhagavan.

In connection with this day, Kavyakanta once wrote to Sri Bhagavan from Sirsi, Karnataka (June 6, 1931): "Lord, Who has assumed the Form of a man for the World Play, Accept our respects from here on the holy day of the Blessed Mother's worship. We bow to Soundaryamba,² consort of Sundara, who brought you forth. The Lord, endowed with all the rare traits of the great incarnations for the welfare of the world, for the annihilation of the forces of ignorance, for the elimination of perverse polemics and for the revelation of Truth Reality, as Kausalya, Devaki, Renuka, Maya Devi and Mary brought forth (respectively)

² This is the Sanskrit equivalent of Bhagavan's mother's name in Tamil, Alagammal. *Alagu* means 'beauty', or 'gracefulness'.

Sri Rama, the Protector of the Munis, Sri Krishna, the teacher of Yoga Vidya, Parasurama, the lifelong celibate Preceptor, Sakya Muni (Buddha) who gave refuge to all beings and the Son of Man (Christ) who chose to bear the weight of all devotees' sins on himself. We bow to Matrubhuteswara installed and presiding over her Samadhi and to the devotees of Bhagavan conducting the worship at the *Sanctum*."

This year the day on which Sri Bhagavan liberated his mother from the cycle of *samsara* fell on the 31st of May. Special *puja* was conducted at Sri Matrubhuteswara and devotees were treated to a special lunch. The previous evening was celebrated with music by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan and Dr. Sarada.

Naalvars' Vimukti

Periya Puranam (the life of 63 Saivaite saints) is the only spiritual text read by Sri Bhagavan before his advent to Arunachalam just after his Self-Realisation at Madurai. Bhagavan knew the value of dwelling on the lives and works of these saints and often asked devotees to read out loud or he himself would read out loud selections from the works of Sundarar, Appar, Sambandar and Manikkavachakar on the days of their Videhamukti. On the day his mother Alagamma was liberated at Skandasramam he had the entire *Tiruvachagam* read throughout the night.

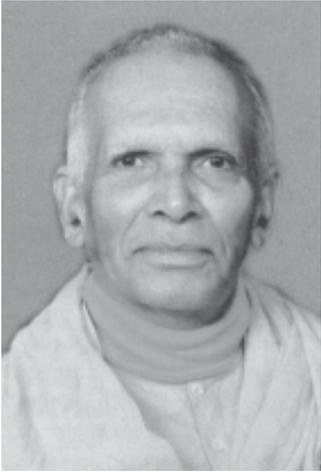
Respective dates this year are: Appar (Chittirai – Satayam) 03-05-05; Jnana Sambandar (Vaigasi-mulam) 26-05-05; Manikkavachakar (Aanimagam) 10-07-05; and Sundaramurti (Aadi-Swati) 12-08-05.

Obituary

Swami Ranganathananda

President of Ramakrishna Mission since 1998, he attained samadhi on April 25th at Kolkata. He was 96 years old. Swami Ranganathananda had met Bhagavan on more than one occasion. These encounters had a profound impact on him. Born in Trikkur, Kerala, in 1908, the young Sankaran joined the Ramakrishna order in Mysore at the age of 18. For the next twelve years he trained under Swami Siddeswarananda who initiated him into *sannyas* in 1933. It was during these years that he learnt about Sri Ramana. Swami Siddeswarananda was a regular visitor to Sri Ramanasramam. One of his articles about Sri Ramana was published in an appendix to *The Maharshi's Gospel*.

Over the years Swamiji served at the Ramakrishna Maths in Rangoon, Karachi, Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad. He was the first recipient of the



Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration and several times declined the prestigious *Padma Bushan*. A noted scholar and thinker, his discourses on the *Upanishads* and *Gita* inspired audiences of diverse traditions. In 1979 Swamiji came to Sri Ramanasramam for the Centenary celebrations and delivered a memorable two-hour lecture on Sri Ramana.

As an individual he was very open-minded. He was a humble, magnanimous person with a fine sense of decorum. His considerable learning and wide experience was placed at the service of all who approached him. Those who had the good fortune to receive his blessings will always remember his poise and dignity. He was a great soul.

On a personal note, he wrote to the editor of *The Mountain Path* two years ago expressing his appreciation of the new format. That he would take the time and trouble to do so at his age and with all the responsibilities on his shoulders, speaks louder than words.

Ramachandra Sthapathi

We regret to inform of the demise of Sri V. Ramachandra Sthapati. Sri Ramachandra Sthapati orchestrated the Ashram renovations in 2004 in preparation for Kumbhabhishekam last November. His temple projects included Sri Rama Temple and Sri Venkateswara Temple, New Delhi, Sri Balaji Temple, Pune, and Rajagopuram of Sri Shiva Vishnu Temple, T Nagar, Chennai. His father Sri Vaidyanatha Sthapati shared an intimate relationship with Bhagavan and was entrusted with the design and construction of the Mother's Shrine as well as the statue of Sri Bhagavan. Both sons, excelled in Shilpa Shastra though Sri Ramachandra Sthapati was equally proficient in Carnatic music. Devotees are grateful for his contribution to the Ashram.

