

CONTENTS

RAMANA ASHTOTTARAM	2
EDITORIAL: Coming to Our Senses	3
SOME PERSONAL NOTES ON LOVING ONESELF: Alasdair Black	9
KEYWORD: Maya	19
MANIKKAVACHAKAR IN TIRUVANNAMALAI: Monica Bose	23
ULLADU NARPADU VERSE EIGHT: S. Ram Mohan	33
TIRUVANNAMALAI: THE SITE IN ITS REGION: Jean Deloche	37
FROM OUR ARCHIVES: Tiruchuzhi Lakshmiammal	45
SRI DAKSHINAMURTI SWAMI: T.V. Venkatasubramanian	47
APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SANKARA: Jonathan Bader	53
VERSE: Alan Jacobs	61
HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN: Ramaswami Pillai	63
BHAGAVAN AND MANIKKAVACHAKAR: Robert Butler	67
ALL COMMOTION ECLIPSED BY MIGHTY TSUNAMI OF SILENCE: Kristal Forest	81
LETTERS TO FRIENDS: Swami Sadhu Om	85
BACH FLOWER REMEDIES: Patrick Roberts	89
VIVEKACHUDAMANI OF SANKARACHARYA BHAGAVATPADA: John Grimes	95
BOOK EXCERPT: VIVEKACHUDAMANI: John Grimes	103
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	112
BOOK REVIEWS	115
RAMANA KID'S CORNER	123
ASHRAM BULLETIN	126

Ramana Ashtottaram

30. *Om Sthiraya namaha*

Prostration to the one who is firm and unmoving.

Bhagavan is the still Being wherein all things move and live. He is *achala*, the stillness of pure Being. He is *stambhu*, the unwavering awareness of pure Being.

For those who were fortunate to be in the physical presence of Bhagavan, they could easily experience the peace that transcends understanding. For those who came after his *mahanirvana*, his silent, invisible presence radiates a strength and compassion which is unaffected by our identification with the confusion of our limited mind.

31. *Om Tapah kshapita sarvangaya namaha*

Prostration to the one whose whole body had shrunk by *tapas*.

During his first few months in Tiruvannamalai, Bhagavan was utterly oblivious of his body. He did not bathe it nor clothe it and he went for long periods without food. He was thus reduced to a mere bundle of skin and bones. The six months in the great temple of Arunachaleswara, and two years in Gurumurtham and in a mango grove near it, were spent in deep *samadhi* devoid of body-consciousness. However we should be careful to understand that Bhagavan's *tapas* was not due to a deliberate wish to perform austerities, rather Bhagavan's *tapas* was the natural, spontaneous effect of his complete lack of body-consciousness when he became absorbed in Arunachala-Siva. ▲

EDITORIAL

Coming to Our Senses

Human beings are programmed for curiosity with the corollary of yearning for something better. Our intelligence constantly strives to push back and enlarge our boundaries, be they mental, emotional or physical. In the Vedas, we find hymns that praise the various gods Indra, Varuna, Mitra, and Vayu among others. If we explore the meaning of these hymns we realise that the rishis are praising a god in order to gain the power of discernment, so that they too can enjoy the Soma, the divine delight of pure being. Indra is the power of the mind which is able to evoke the energies of pure existence; Vayu, stimulates the juice of Soma that can flow and purify our mortal mind; Varuna is the power and clarity which removes the impurities and limitations of the imperfect mind, and Mitra is the activity of love and joy in harmony, which is the foundation of a strong and bright intellect that discriminates between what is true and what is false.

Today the traditional tools available to us are hard to come by and the gods seem to be silent. The modern world disparages for the most part the reality of the inner, unseen world where the gods and demons exist. The only justification for the truth of an ideal appears to be its physical manifestation; in this way, truth has been inverted and leaves us dissatisfied. Wealth and power are the tokens by which people evaluate their own worth. They see the jealousy and envy of others as confirmation of their own value, while instead of praise for others we hear ridicule as though in some way that underlines our own worth.

For those who fail to heed 'common sense' and are reluctant to embrace the overt security of society with its subtle conventions, there is the dilemma as to what they should do without compromising this inner urge that asks inconvenient questions. It is not so much a rational decision as a compulsion; like the salmon trying desperately to find its way home. We meet these awkward people frequently in our lives and it is interesting to observe the many ways in which their craving for certainty, evolves. They may see a desirable yet distant object and embark on a pilgrimage. They may give in to the lure of danger like racing cars or climbing mountains,¹ or develop a hobby that satisfies their appetite for solitude where they can think their private thoughts without hindrance — there are many anglers who have never caught a fish and wouldn't know what to do with one if they did. We all in fact, create a private bubble in which to be free of customary constraints. In whatever form it takes this personal quest may constitute the whole meaning of life to many people. Without hesitation, they make sacrifices that appear enormous to others. For them it is nothing, for what they value is greater than the sum of the benefits that they now

¹ 'When climbing, the presence of mind that one needs in dangerous situations makes one naturally undistracted, that that undistractedness is what generates awareness and a feeling of being completely alive. Every action becomes meaningful because each movement is a matter of life and death. As one rock climber reportedly said when asked why he climbed high and extremely difficult vertical cliffs solo, without a rope: "It helps my concentration."' *Touching My Father's Soul* by Jamling Tenzing Norgay. p 218-9 Ebury Press 2001.

enjoy. What exactly it is they cannot say but it does involve a sense of harmony and rightness in the moment.

Some follow a different path that leads them to look for truth in a microscope or test tube or even in the fluctuations of the stock market, whilst for others who have neither the knowledge nor the persistence to find their way, there is often a fall into licentiousness and worldly self-gratification. The sceptic finds consolation in the reassurance that the ultimate truth does not exist. The down-to-earth pragmatist can find his goal in the preparation of delicious food and the enjoyment of eating. The poet addresses the ideal dream in ecstatic prayers of worship and vain songs of despair. The musician tries to capture the distant notes of harmony.

Whatever symbols the seeker uses in his objective quest none has been able to persuade the world that what they have found is the ultimate fulfilment. Yet, we do hear reports from those rare souls who succeed in establishing communication with some higher spirit in them. They seem to have prevailed where others were ineffectual. These rare souls have become whole and radiant with peace in a way that is instantly recognised and brooks no denial. They aver that there is something immaterial which is the true and final object of people's longing.

There have been so many similar reports over the centuries by those who came back to tell us of their journey and discovery that we cannot dismiss their assertions as delusions simply because we lacked the opportunity or courage to penetrate beyond the mist of our own confusion. So remote are some of the conclusions we read and hear that if we wish to follow the same trail we need a definite preparation that requires us to leave behind our preconceptions. This elimination of our stale habits of thought and feeling which so far have not lead anywhere is a prerequisite if we are to be open to the unknown, the new, the unimaginable to which mystics so often refer.

They say purification is the gateway to knowledge. We need to come to this encounter with the unknown with clear minds free of prejudice and also free of the convention of taking the visible world as the only reality. We must give up our assumptions and enter a state that simulates nothingness. In Sufi literature it is called, *faqr*, in

Christianity, *apatheia*; in Hinduism, the one-pointed absorption of *dhyana*. We cannot begin to understand what those masters of the inner reality speak about until we too are able to enter in some measure that silence where our so-called solid world seems but another dream with little substance.

Where do we start? We can only start with what we have, our sense of 'I', the self-conscious individual who is pondering the quest. No arguments can shake our conviction that we are alive and exist. To this 'I' comes a perpetual stream of messages and experiences. A human being is defined by his or her encounter with their specific world and how they react to it. What are these experiences that we undergo in the course of everyday life? And what do they mean? We encounter the external world through our senses as we interpret and construct our universe from the impulses that arrive in our brain. Through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin we attempt to create a coherent image, which is consistent and safe. To live we are forced to engage with it and to gain its compliance if our physical body is to survive.

The mind accepts, rejects, sorts and combines these impressions gathered by the five senses and creates a concept, which is attributed to the external world. The world consequently consists of impressions. If one carefully considers this idea then the world cannot be something external to the mind. The world is in the mind. If we take this thought to its conclusion, we can say the mind *is* the world. The world is the unique creation of an individual. Each person creates their own world and the inter-exchange between different people's worlds is a dialogue taut with its own private language and significance. Each person is an artist who creates their own world using an individual palette of ideas.

There is no absolute reality because it is dependent on what the variable mind makes of it. There is no direct, unmediated relationship between the world and the mind. We live with second hand information. We construct a world by using concepts derived from the information provided by our senses. The evidence of the senses is variable and therefore cannot be accepted as a corroboration of the

true nature of the world. The external limit of our senses is the boundary of our physical explorations and to know oneself is only to know one's personal universe. We are locked up with the limitations of our sensory capacity.²

There are mystics who have the aptitude to see colour as sound and sound as colour. Some animals see in the infrared things, which we too can see, but only with the aid of machinery. The world sends us the same messages but with an alteration in our senses, we would receive the impressions in a different way, which are no less true. Therefore, our senses cannot lead us to an absolute, an unchanging reality which we do require as a substratum upon which the passing show exists; a still centre of the spinning world is essential.

If we are completely dependent upon our fallible senses for knowledge of the world who is it who decides what is true and false? Who discriminates between what is absolute and what is impermanent? When the mind is in constant flux who are we to decide what is real and what illusion? We seek a transcendent principle applicable to all circumstances, one that presupposes a standard which is not dependent upon the senses for confirmation.

Meister Eckhart said that the word *sum*, I am, cannot be spoken by any creature but by God alone. Because we are so identified with the senses, we identify our being, our sense of 'I' with the *jnanendriyas*³ and *karmendriyas*.⁴ We forget the base upon which the impressions are made — the great white invisible screen of consciousness untainted by the stream of forms emitted in the attempt to visualise and understand who we are. We create forms with our mind and are swallowed up by the spell of their convincing allure.

There is the famous analogy of Plato who proposed that we all are like prisoners chained to a wall in a cave. We are unable to turn round

² Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* stated that we can never know the nature of things but only what filters through our senses and is processed by our mind at second-hand. We can never directly experience the *thing in itself*.

³ The five faculties of sensation: sight, touch, taste, sound and smell.

⁴ The five faculties of action: hands, feet, voice, generation and excretion.

towards the light of a fire at the entrance of the cave and so all we can see are the flickering images on the wall in front of us that are but shadows of those activities. Our world is made up of shadows and we never see things as they are. Bhagavan in *Spiritual Instruction* gave a similar illustration of the movie theatre to illustrate the process of identification with the effects of activity rather than seeking the source of the activity. He explained that the Self was the light shining of its own accord. When the film of latent tendencies is passed across the lens of limited individuality, the light of the Self throws the movement of the dream and waking states on to the clear screen of consciousness.⁵

To see for ourselves and experience directly the source of our being, we should not depend on external images or ideas that have taken form as thought, but turn round and go right back to the heart of our predicament: who is it who sees; who is it who is conscious? ▲

⁵ *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, pp.59-60, Sri Ramanasramam 2001. See also *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam* by S. Nagamma, pp. 310-11, 1995.

Some Personal Notes on Loving Oneself

ALASDAIR BLACK

I once worked with a Roman Catholic priest who said to me: “The trouble with you is you don’t love yourself!” Which was true. But although that good and compassionate man was able to demonstrate very clearly how to love *others*, he was unwilling to explain how he also managed to love *himself*. Indeed, he once admitted that he had the same problem; that he had great difficulty in loving himself at all!

We all know how vitally important it is to love ourselves in our daily lives and activities, for the simple reason that it is otherwise impossible to love others. Indeed, it is a requirement of the Christian faith that we love God, others and ourselves equally. Which tells us what is needed, but not how to do it; nor is there anything in this about loving everything else in nature as well as other people. Bhagavan, on the other hand, was clear that we need to love everything in creation — animals, trees, stones, the Earth itself — indeed, *everything we are*

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aware of. This obviously includes other people and ourselves. Bhagavan taught that while our main effort needs to be in loving ourselves, it is impossible to do this properly without loving others and everything else as well. We have his assurance, however, that if we persist in loving in this way, we will eventually realise our true Self and that with this realisation comes the realisation that we *are* all these others — that God, we ourselves and others are all one and the same.

Which is all very well, but *what is love* and *how do we love ourselves in our daily lives and activities*? At which point I have to admit that I am as useless as the priest and can only offer my own understanding of what may be involved.

As to what love actually is, on the assumption that most of us are, like myself, unrealised and living in a state of duality, a very simple definition of love is to completely identify with the object of one's love, disinterestedly wishing only for what one understands to be best for that object and without wishing for anything in return. The question of *what is best* is a matter for God, for *Iswara*. Which means that we need to trust, to surrender totally and unconditionally to God, as part of this process of loving. Moreover, love, if it truly is love, does not choose what to love or what not to love — although *liking* is another matter.¹

It follows from all this that we need to begin by loving *ourselves* in this way; while being aware that the 'I' who is loving is the same as the 'I' who is loved. Which is a difficult thing for most of us to do. As to *how* to love ourselves in this way, in all we are engaged in throughout each day, Bhagavan's guidance comes under the general heading of *Surrendered Self-Enquiry*. It is clear from his teaching that a degree of self-discipline, of regular practice is necessary if we are serious in our wish to love ourselves genuinely and to progress towards Self-Realisation.

¹ It is rash to attempt a simple definition of love. There's quite a bit more to it than this. In any case, love which has an object is a dualistic, non-advaitic concept. The kind of love Bhagavan taught was, I think, more to do with *a state of love*, of *being* in love, with oneself and everything else, unconditionally and all the time. 'God is love'. As Bhagavan was.

In one of his earlier works, Bhagavan describes the way in which the 'I' — the ego or the false self — arises when we awake each morning, at the same moment that our perception of the world as something separate from ourselves arises. And then suggests that having focused on this 'I', we should enquire what is behind it. "*Do not even murmur 'I' but enquire keenly within what it is that now shines within the heart as 'I'*". So we need to try to catch this 'I' thought, the ego, when we awaken to consciousness each morning, and then to ask ourselves: "*Who am I?*" And keep this question in our minds throughout the day. But how to do this? It isn't easy. I can only offer to share my experience of the way I try to do this, in the hope that it may be helpful to others.

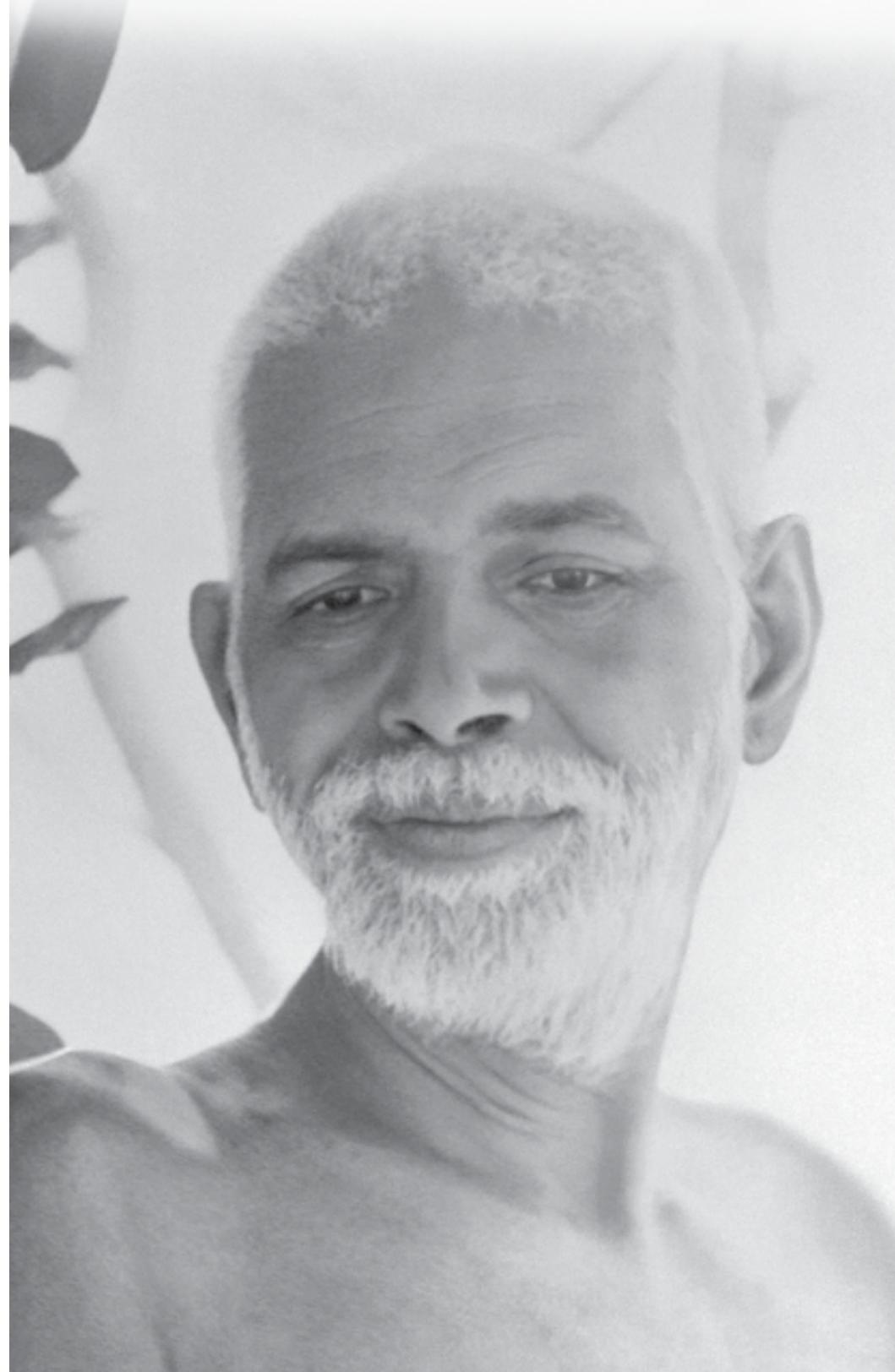
I find it essential to begin with a spell of meditation, however short, as soon as I get out of bed, by sitting in front of two pictures; one of Bhagavan and the other of the Hill. Sometimes for as little as five minutes, but often for half an hour or even more, depending on how I feel and on how much time is available. This meditation ends with a full-length prostration on the floor; both as an act of total surrender and also because it is intrinsically beneficial to assume this posture. If I haven't had a good meditation for some reason, if I haven't been able to concentrate, I find that stretching myself out with my chest and forehead on the ground somehow brings enough stillness into my mind to enable me to give at least a few seconds of completely surrendered attention to the Self.

And then come the days' activities. The world intrudes as soon as the radio comes on with the news. Which is full of negativity. I am appalled that my country has decided to invade another country — which seems to be the least wise of all the options in this particular situation — but what to do? Is there anything I *can* do -- apart from getting on with my own life and work, in the hope that working on my own small part of Bhagavan's canvas, *his* masterpiece, may be what is required of me. *He* is the master, the omniscient one. *Who am I* anyway to say that the leaders of my country are right or wrong? They are aware of all kinds of things which I know nothing about. They

have their part of the canvas to paint; I mine. Better to be quiet and to get on with what I have to do. But I am disturbed by what I hear about Iraq on the radio nevertheless, as well as by the other items in the news.

Then, on the way to work, there are more upsetting things. I might have started with love in my heart, but I am easily upset if someone pushes in front of me to get on the bus or the train. How dare these foreigners behave like this? In London — where I live and work — there are people from every part of the world who now seem to outnumber us, the ‘natives’. Who do they think they are, these foreigners? Pushing and shoving as if they were still in Djibouti or Jakarta? In fact the more serene my meditation has been, the more easily I am upset by this kind of thing. Which is puzzling. My meditation was meant to make me oblivious to these petty irritations. Perhaps I don’t really have any love in my heart at all? It is *what is in my heart from moment to moment* which seems to matter. My mood can so quickly change from one of love to its opposite. So I try to catch myself, to re-focus myself in the middle of these disturbances, to *‘keep my head cool while my hands are engaged in the activities of the mundane world’*. Which is easier said than done. And anyway, *who am I*, if I have time to reflect, to make these judgments about my fellow creatures? These ‘foreigners’ are here for all kinds of good reasons. They have as much right to be here as myself. To class myself as a native in any case begs all kinds of other questions. Was I not myself born in another distant country, one which my own country happened to be colonising at that time? What a waste of energy all this speculation, all this agitation, is. An observation I am sometimes aware enough to make, but as often not.

I happen to be a lawyer, a profession whose function is, amongst other things, to deal in negativity in one form or another. We pay lawyers to protect our property and rights, to guide us through the wilderness of official rules which are meant to regulate our activities; to stop us straying into pitfalls; to steer us through the shoals of regulations which have come into being for various reasons, including our politicians’ current notions of what is good for us, quite apart



from our own moral inadequacy. Are lawyers therefore merely parasites preying on human weakness and would we be better off without them?²

Thoughts like these pass through my mind as I make my way to the office. Until I catch myself, if I am lucky, and remind myself of another thing Bhagavan stressed: that too much thought is not helpful. Too much thought. Yes. But it's difficult *not* to think — in an urban landscape in which everything around me evokes thought, a landscape in which almost everything is after all the *result* of thought; expressed in squares, cubes, circles or straight lines, or in variants of these — windows, wheels, paving stones, streets ... projections, all of them, of the way the human mind finds it easiest to control, to manipulate, the chaotic diversity of nature — nature whose own shapes and forms are mostly so irregular — trees, babies, clouds, flies ... although there are

² 'Law is merely the codified acceptance of what we are,' said J. Krishnamurti, who also observed that the law, like politics, is a dealing in the realm of *effects*. Negative effects mostly. As opposed to *causes*, which are the preserve of the more creative professions (such as those of the educators, philosophers and artists). While politicians are in the business of *manipulating* effects, lawyers *regulate and contain* them. *Someone* has to deal with these effects. Effects for which we are *all* responsible after all, because of the way we live. Finding ourselves caught in the tangled branches of a tree, we like to forget that we ourselves planted, or helped to plant, the seed of that tree. The result of not dealing with these effects is that more and possibly worse effects may ensue. Lawyers are therefore a necessary evil. We pay them, as well as our politicians, to deal with the effects *we, all of us*, have caused; we pay them To clean up *our* mess. Or to try to prevent us from getting into messes in the first place. However, the legal profession can also be creative in its way, if it is undertaken with sensitivity and a bit of humour. And anyway, is not this talk of cause and effect a little bit abstruse? It is difficult to distinguish cause and effect. The cause *is*, in a sense, the effect. The cause is certainly *present* in the effect. In dealing with the effect, do we not also deal with the cause? To sort out a tangle of effects is to sort out the selfsame threads which caused the tangle in the first place. Buddhists go into the dynamics of cause and effect in some depth. Alan Watts (a Buddhist writer) went into all this in a little book he wrote, whose name I forget, but the main point of which was that if one deals adequately with the effects when one becomes aware of them, that *psychologically* sorts out the cause — the original mistake — as well. In any case, on one level both cause and effect exist only in the mind.

the circles of the sun and moon, the straight line of the horizon and the mathematically precise form of a honeycomb ...

Chatter, chatter, chatter. Will my mind ever stop? Where is love in all this — of myself or of anything else? But I can't stop myself thinking in this way, however much I try. My thoughts, although partly due to my environment are in any case compulsive, feeding off themselves, one thought leading to another, impelled by desire in one form or other, by *vasanas*, habits of the mind. Which are in turn connected with what I eat — which starts another train of thought ... The thing to do, perhaps, is simply to let all these thoughts run *in, through* and *out* of my mind, without, hopefully, allowing them to leave any residue, any precursor to more thought. Which is much easier said than done.

One way of coping with thought, of keeping it positive, is through the repetition of mantras, or prayers; to keep repeating, for example: '*Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya*'. Bhagavan sometimes counselled the repetition of mantras, which one can do siletly in one's mind.

Then, in the office, I am confronted with even more thought-provoking situations, beginning with opening the post. A letter reads: "It is noted that your client has failed to apply to extend the term of his lease by 31 December 2004 as required by Clause 24. Your client is therefore required to leave his home by 31 January 2005." Heavens! Should Mr Smith have done that, or rather, shouldn't *I* have reminded him to give in his notice by 31 December? Heavens above! Has he got anywhere to go? Shouldn't I have advised him that he had to give in his notice by that date? Poor Mr Smith! And it's my fault! There was a time when I would have broken out in a cold sweat whenever anything like this happened. Even now I might say: "Bhagavan, please help me. *Please!*"

Like all of us, however, I have learned not to take these things at face value. It might turn out that the author of the letter had not himself read the lease correctly. Or that Mr Smith had in fact given his notice in time, but that whoever sent the letter was not aware of this. The mind in any case plays all kinds of tricks. Bhagavan's story comes to mind, about the parents who believed for many years that their child had died because someone had told them so, a report which

turned out to be untrue and which meant that their long period of grief and suffering had been unnecessary. In the same way, the results of mistakes made by lawyers may come to light many years after they have been made. In a Will, for example, when the Testator dies, although the lawyer who had prepared the faulty Will might have done so many years previously.

The point about all this is that I, the lawyer, am not more or less loveable before or after the mistake comes to light; whereas my reaction on becoming aware of having made the mistake is to hate myself. *“And such a want-wit sadness makes of me that I have much ado to know myself.”*³

But who am “I” to judge myself in this way? A long time might have elapsed before the mistake came to light, a time in which I remained blissfully unaware of having done anything wrong and in which I continued to love myself as much as usual. I did not in any case make the mistake intentionally, although I might have been negligent in some way. And there may be consequences which now have to be dealt with, *effects* which I, the lawyer, have caused! I am after all paid to foresee and to prevent these effects! But if a colleague had made such a mistake, would I condemn him? I hope not. I hope that rather than doing so I would help put matters right as far as possible. Then why should I judge myself? A great deal of unnecessary pain and anguish is involved in attempting any judgments of this sort. Which doesn't stop us doing it. It is natural to loathe ourselves when we realise we have made a mistake; though it need not be, *and if we adopted the perspective that Bhagavan teaches it would not be.*

Failing to accept ourselves in these or other situations renders us less able to get on with what we need to do in the here and now. The trick is to be unaffected by success or failure, perfection or imperfection; both in ourselves and in others. Again, this is much easier said than done. Judgments in these situations are a reflex of the ego, an expression of our lack of Self-knowledge.

It may not be a bad thing, however, to appeal to Bhagavan for help

³ The opening lines of *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare.

in these situations. Although we have that help, in the form of his grace, at all times, we often forget this, especially at times of crisis when reason flies out of the window — just when we need to love ourselves most. The important point is *to be aware* of Bhagavan, that is, *of our real Self*, all the time. Like the monkeys who may seem to be playing but who never lose sight of the fruit they are trying to steal.⁴

An important part of keeping one's balance is to keep to a proper diet, *a moderate diet of sattvic food*, as Bhagavan prescribed. Which can be difficult in the emotional turmoil of a day in the life of a lawyer — indeed of anyone. My own immediate reaction when I am upset is to drink a cup of tea or coffee, or to eat a bun or some chocolate. Some of us smoke cigarettes, or make calls on our mobile phones in these situations. None of which are ideal reactions. I haven't yet found the answer to this one and would appreciate any suggestions.

Finally, in theory, I again meditate before I go to bed — although I have to admit that this sometimes (often) doesn't happen if I am too tired — with the same period of five minutes or more in front of the same two pictures, going into a private world in which I begin by imagining myself in the Ashram, sitting in the Old Hall or on the way up to Skandasramam. That beautiful path. Or wandering from Skandasramam down and into Virupaksha Cave and sitting there. Before trying to gradually quieten and if possible to eliminate all thought. ▲

⁴ *Pramada*. Forgetfulness of the Self (See *Padamalai* by Muruganar, ed. D. Godman, 2004, p. 49). But I find it very difficult to maintain this current of Self-remembrance in my daily activities, particularly when things are going wrong.



KEYWORD

Maya

Sanskrit: Illusion, unreality, magical power. In earlier Sanskrit literature, it meant art, wisdom, extraordinary power. Its connotation in more recent texts is that it is the power to make the unreal to appear as real and vice versa.

The root of *maya* is *ma* that means to measure. In other words, the immeasurable Brahman appears as if it is measured or limited by time and space. It displays the universal consciousness as a duality thus producing delusion and error. This *maya* can be regarded as a *sakti* or attribute of Brahman. Brahman which is essentially attributeless, *nirguna*, when viewed in relation to *maya* is *saguna* or having attributes.

Bhagavan differed from the conventional emphasis on *maya* as an independent active entity or *sakti*.¹ He taught that *maya* is 'ya ma', meaning 'that which is not', but this is a truth that will be realised only when we know self as it really is. So long as we mistake ourselves to be an individual, we cannot but see the world of names and forms as real. Since this apparent individual and the world he sees are both

¹ A good analysis of this can be found in *Day by Day with Bhagavan* 29th May 1946. See also *Kaivalya Navaneeta*, pp.47-8, trans. Swami Ramanananda Saraswathi, Sri Ramanasramam 1981.

products of maya, so long as we experience them we cannot experience the truth that maya is non-existent. Though Bhagavan taught that the ultimate truth is that maya (and all its products) are non-existence, he also taught that so long multiplicity appears to exist, the seeming existence of a power called maya — a power that makes the unreal to appear as real and the real to appear as unreal — cannot be denied. When trying to understand Bhagavan's teachings, we should understand each teaching in the context it is given, and should not mix up different levels of reality. The ultimate truth is *ajata*, that self alone exists, and that nothing else ever exists or even appears to exist. This is the truth we seek to realise, but until we do so, we remain in the state of relative truth, in which maya and all its products appear as real. The world we see is as real as us, the individual who sees it, and we, this individual, are as real as maya — the power of self-forgetfulness that makes us think that we are what we are not.

Thus, it has been stated in Advaita Vedanta that this world of time and space which includes all things and beings contained in it are not real though they appear to be so. Though through the ages Self-realized Masters have confirmed this based on first hand experience, it is a statement extremely difficult for us to understand.

Take for example an incident when one's hand is accidentally burnt. There are some who say that the fire, burning and pain are all maya. We would immediately dismiss this assertion because the pain experienced by us is very much real. Yet if one were asleep and dreamt that one's hand was burnt it seems real but upon waking up we would think it a dream and realise the fire and damaged hand are non-existent. Would we not say that the incident was maya, that is, unreal?

Bhagavan says, "*Maya* makes us regard as non-existent the Self, the reality, which is present always and everywhere, all pervasive and self-luminous. On the contrary, it makes us regard as real the individual soul (*jiva*), the world (*jagat*), and the Creator (*para*) which have been conclusively proved to be non-existent."²

² *Spiritual Instruction*, Chapter 2, the answer to question 5, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

How does this happen? Muruganar explains Bhagavan's words: "The changeless Self hides as transcendental reality and throws the three *avasthas* (states of deep sleep, dreaming and waking), like a juggler throwing his rope, in the mental sky and makes the individuals who mistake it to be true to climb up; thus conducting the show."³

The life experiences of human beings rotate through these three states. Each state negates the other two and therefore none of these three states are real. And yet the transcendental knowledge to discriminate between what is real, what is unreal is not available, and each state is mistaken to be real while it lasts; that is because of maya.

When we are in the waking state, we should not enter into deep sleep or dreaming states, which are also subject to maya. We should break away from maya and enter into fourth state. Bhagavan explains: "The individual self living through three states of waking, deep sleep and dream again and again is not our real Self (*Atma*). Reality (Self) is different. It is like witness unaffected by these three states and is called '*turiya*' or the fourth (state). When this state is realized the other three states terminate and therefore calling it fourth state or witness also becomes meaningless. Hence it is called *turiyathitha* or transcendental."⁴

How does one do it? Bhagavan says: "Our activities in the world are accomplished intermittently by our fragmented mind (self); but being still within (*mouna*) is accomplished by the whole mind (Self or *atma vyavahara*) without break. *Maya* is destroyed only by engaging with supreme effort in *mouna*; it is not destroyed by any other means."⁵

Let us therefore lose our self in *mouna* and break the clutches of maya. ▲

³ *Guru Vachaka Kovai* v. 103 and Muruganar's paraphrase.

⁴ *Spiritual Instruction*, Chapter 4, the answer to question 8, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter 2, the answer to question 4.



Manikkavachakar in Tiruvannamalai

MONICA BOSE

Although he is said to have lived at least 12 centuries ago, Manikkavachakar, the Saivite poet, saint and sage, has left us a precious legacy of hymns in the *Tiruvachakam*, the Divine Utterances, that still strike a deep chord in many people, not just in Tamil Nadu but worldwide. His songs addressed to Lord Shiva have, from remote times, helped those who seek for spiritual salvation, showing the way through love to the happiness and peace of the Kingdom of God, which is within us.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi regarded Manikkavachakar as one of the greatest devotional poets of all time. During his saintly mother's last moments, Bhagavan instructed his devotees to chant the entire *Tiruvachakam* which ends with the poet's final blissful absorption in the Lord.

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The Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala composed by Bhagavan are in the same ancient devotional genre, however the hymns of Manikkavachakar vividly recount the different moments of his personal progression, from the most poignant state of desolation when he felt the Lord had withdrawn His presence from him, to rapturous joy when he felt the Lord had entered his body and soul and made him His own.

Manikkavachakar's paeans are overflowing with his spontaneous love for the Lord. Bhagavan too in his hymns to Arunachala, sings of the abounding love in his heart for the Beloved. Asked how he, an advaitin, could speak of love for Arunachala, Bhagavan, a true jnani, replied that there was no duality in this, for "Pure Love is the Self Itself. God is Love." As Thomas Merton comments, "It is Love loving in Love."

Manikkavachakar treats birds, bees and insects as fellow songsters who, like himself, sing of their love for the Lord. They are perhaps the souls of devotees liberated by their love for they evidently have free access to the Lord, since the poet exhorts his little friend the kuyil "to go call Him to come." But much more frequently Manikkavachakar mentions the Feet of the Lord, symbol of the enslavement of the lover of God. For it is through enslavement to Him that true freedom is found. He sings in adoration:

Obeisance to the flowery feet,
Obeisance to the golden flowers which enslave us
That we may be redeemed! 7.20¹

Two of Manikkavachakar's most beautiful and inspiring hymns in the *Tiruvachakam* are hymn 7, *Tiruvempavai*, The Song to Our Lady,² and hymn 8, *Tiruvammanai*, The Sacred Game of *Ammanai*, both of which were composed in Tiruvannamalai. We can deduce from the facts known to us that he was a young man in his twenties at the time he came to Tiruvannamalai, "a green and pleasant land whose mountain

¹ *Pathway to God* by G. Vanmikanathan, p.228, Sri Kasi Mutt, Thiruppanandal 1980.

² Or "In Adoration of Shakti".

Annamalai is the very form of the Lord." And where, at Adi Annamalai there is a temple built in his honour. He only paused there on his long pilgrimage to Tillai, or Chidambaram, the centre of the universe, where Lord Nataraja Siva performs his Cosmic Dance. The Dance, or *leela*, was an image with a great drawing power for Manikkavachakar, and hymn 7 especially, expresses his growing realisation that the entire world is imbued with the movement of the divine dance. And with this, his love for God begins to embrace the whole of His creation which is seen as the Divine nature displayed in all manifestations, *Shivarupam*. Earlier, the poet felt guilty because he was attracted by the physical charms of women, but now his pure detachment has set him free. Having come to understand that all is part of the divine Whole, he can speak of those same charms as the accoutrements of the Goddess as in this verse addressed to Lord Siva:

Oh Treasure ! Oh Bridegroom of the Dame
With narrow waist and collyrium glistening eyes! 7.11.³

The Goddess is not only the Bride of the Lord, She is part of Him — *ardhasareeram*. The legend of how the Goddess obtained union with Shiva was once related by Bhagavan: Parvati won the hand of the Lord after intense *tapas*. One day she playfully closed the eyes of Parameshwara whereupon the whole world fell into turmoil. Parameshwara saved the world by opening His third eye. Then Parvati realized her fault, and started doing arduous penance or *tapas* and after eons, came at last to Tiruvannamalai — where she got the approbation of Arunagireeswara, and obtained *ardhasareeram*.

Manikkavachakar frequently mentions *ardhasareeran*, the hermaphrodite form of the Lord that represents the union of Spirit and Matter, the supreme reconciliation of opposites. In hymn 7, the poet lyrically speaks of immersion in the Divine in terms of diving into the sacred waters of a pool in which appear the insignia of both the God and the Goddess.

³ *Pathway to God* by G. Vanmikanathan, p.234, The Delhi Tamil Sangam, New Delhi, 1971.

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

Plunge into the swelling pool
Which resembles [our Lady and our King]
With its fresh dark Kuvilai flowers
And its fresh red lotus blossoms,
With its beautiful flock of birds
And its entwined snakes,
And with the coming of those people
Who wash away their impurity. 7. 12.⁴

Into this seething deep pool
of lotus-abounding sweet water,
which resembles [our Lady and our King]
by the fresh blue lotus's dark flowers,
by the blossoms of the fresh red lotus,
by the families of beautiful (water) birds,
by the snakes besides,
and by the presence of those
desirous of washing away their *malam* (dirt),
let us dive and sport about. 7. 12.⁵

The dark blue lotus is associated with the Goddess, the red lotus recalls that Siva is the divine Fire, the birds evoke Parvati's parrot, and in legends, entwined snakes adorn Shiva. And we wish that we too could, with pure heart and humble mind, do what the poet-saint bids us — plunge in and play in that refreshing pool of bliss and grace.

The Lord is also compared to milk, honey, and ambrosia, while the responsive soul is one that has been transformed from a dry hard stone into the ripe fruit that melts at the touch of the Lord. Thus we learn something of the saint's experience of God.

Parvati's penance which was completed in Tiruvannamalai is woven into several hymns in the *Tiruvachakam*. In the *Tirukovai*, it figures in

⁴ *Hymns to the Dancing Shiva* by Glenn E. Locum. Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1982. Alternatively there is the translation of this verse by G. Vanmikanathan: (the words 'Our Lady and our King' inserted in square brackets are mine.)

⁵ *Pathway to God* by G. Vanmikanathan, p.235. New Delhi, 1971.



verse 377 which Manikkavachakar composed in Tiruchuzhi, the birthplace of Sri Ramana, in praise of the temple's presiding deity *Bhuminateswara*, a form of Lord Siva. The verse is modelled on the very ancient *sangam* inner or love poetry. Deciphering the symbolic images one finds the story of Parvati's suffering at her separation from Lord Siva, after he withdrew from her into the trance of self-absorption. This theme evokes the pining of the soul for God, a state known only too well to the poet-saint.

Manikkavachakar constantly uses the word *arul*, grace, often in association with enlightenment. Divine wisdom is imparted to man through God's grace. Initiation is the spontaneous coming of God's grace to the soul, it is not sought. God's grace is the remedy for *anavam* (ego) and *malam* (the darkness of ignorance) and is therefore the illuminator of man's life. The poet sings:

This day out of grace to me
You rise in my mind like a sun.

Bhagavan too, repeatedly speaks of the working of grace on the mind, as in the *Marital Garland*, verse 49:

Treasure of benign and holy Grace, found without seeking,
Steady my wandering mind, O Arunachala!

The legend of the fiery origin of Arunachala, one of the oldest Indian myths, is likewise prominent in Manikkavachakar's hymns. The gods, Vishnu and Siva could not find the beginning or end of the blazing pillar of fire.

The poet stresses that other-worldly beings cannot truly know Lord Shiva, because one has to have the blessing of an earthly birth in order to actually appreciate God. This world is not only our playground, it is our school as well and the highest attainment is not possible outside it, a truth eloquently expressed in 7.10: "His flower-laden crown is all knowledge's end."⁶

⁶ *Pathway to God* by G. Vanmikanathan, p. 234. New Delhi, 1971.

Hymn 7, the *Tiruvempavai*, was inspired by what the poet saw in Tiruvannamalai in the month of *Marghazhi*, December-January, the time of harvest and the renewal of life. The month of *Marghazhi* comes after days obscured by dark clouds and is mythologically the time when the universe reawakens — it is the dawn of the *devas*. The mood accordingly is one of vigour, of delight in newness combined with wonder at the revelation of God in nature, as when the rosy Feet of Lord Siva on earth are described by the poet as "pink leaf-shoots."

Manikkavachakar set the scene of hymn 7 at dawn. He gives us this description of early morning in Tiruvannamalai many centuries ago:

On the cock growing,
Birds have begun to chirp everywhere,
On the sounding of the seven scale music pipes,
White conches have begun to sound everywhere.⁷

The *Tiruvempavai* gives an entrancing account of a young girl's experience of spiritual love for the Lord. It is told in the framework of a song of awakening.

Elsewhere, Manikkavachakar speaks of dedicated work and service to God as being the road to bliss, but for the two hymns composed in Tiruvannamalai he makes use of the playfulness of girls. In the spirit of the *leela*, the verses are put in the mouth of innocent carefree children at play.

It was the custom that during *Marghazhi*, very early in the morning, girls went from house to house singing hymns to the Lord and Goddess on their way to a ritual bath. In the poem, a group of maidens come to a house where the young girl inside is apparently still asleep, and they call on her to join them. They are surprised that although she must have heard them sing the praises of Lord Siva she has still not arisen to join them in their worship. In the past, they have often heard her speak of her passion for *Paranjothi*, the resplendent light, but today she is silent. Goaded by them to sing His praise, she replies that she, a young novice cannot possibly speak of the infinite and ineffable Lord,

⁷ *Pathway to God* by G. Vanmikanathan, p.222. New Delhi, 1971.

Who is present in all Nature and Who lives in the heart of innumerable devotees, for no praise can do Him justice.

The group then goes on without her to the flower-filled tank. They plunge in, play happily and sing their hymns to the Lord and Goddess. As for the young girl, she remains alone, apart from the rest of society in her ecstasy of devotional love for the Great King who has enslaved her. She has no need to accompany the others to the tank for the ritual bath because she is immersed in an ocean of divine bliss. She perhaps represents the young Parvati, the potential in each soul for fulfilment as the bride who unites with the divine Bridegroom. Or again, she may represent Manikkavachakar himself at the stage of his growing unitive knowledge of the One Reality.⁸

The poem is full of light, gone are the dark sentiments of self-denigration, despair and desolation that marked the preceding 150 stanzas. Fittingly, since the poem was written in Tiruvannamalai, where Shiva appeared as the divine Fire, the hymn commences with the girls lauding the Infinite Effulgence (*aadiyum andamum illa arul-perum-jyoti*). And the mystical splendour is recalled in the refrain of each verse: “Our Lady Fair, Arise!”⁹ the call to the sleeping maiden — also to his listeners through the ages — to awaken from the dark night of ignorance and inertia into the glorious day of life in God.

The poet composed hymn 8, the *Tiruvammanai* to accompany the game of Ammanai. Six girls sitting in a circle toss little pebbles or cowrie shells into the air and catch them on the back of their hands. Each upward throw aptly communicates the upsurge of rapture the poet-saint feels at his release by the Lord from karmic bondage. The refrain of each verse is “Sing ye Ammanai,” for in this way the players can attune themselves to His music, the cosmic harmony, and so become one with Him.

In this ode, the poet-saint retraces his previous incarnations down to the present one in which, in spite of his unworthiness, the Lord in

His mercy manifested Himself to him as a Guru who “instructed him in things unknown and made visible things unseen before.” Then the Lord came and bestowed the supreme illumination on him. Manikkavachakar tells the children to sing of Him Who Took pity on me and, through inconceivable sweet grace appeared as an Effulgent One and was moved with compassion to make His light shine inside my innermost being.¹⁰

One is struck by the profound experience from which the hymn emanates. In the *Tiruvempavai*, one partakes of the poet-saint’s wonderment at the Lord’s all-pervading presence in Nature, in the *Tiruvammanai* one senses his deep, burning love for the mighty Lord Who, coming as Light set alight his soul.

In the last verse of the *Tiruvammanai*, he bids us cling to the supreme bliss that in His mercy takes possession of us, so that the bonds of earthly attachment may be severed forever for us.

So ends Manikkavachakar’s message to us from Tiruvannamalai, where he sang of the Flower-crowned Giver of bliss, grace, light and love, in words whose truth and beauty will never fade.

Finally, Sadhu Arunachala in a *Sadhu’s Reminiscences of Ramana Maharshi* writes: “One day Bhagavan was telling us that the Tamil Saint Manickavasagar’s body disappeared in a blaze of light leaving no residue.”¹¹

Now, as is well known, immediately after Bhagavan’s *Mahasamadhi* his manifestation was seen as a blazing star in the sky travelling towards the peak of Arunachala and merging into it. When we consider the Hill of Fire and Light and the revelations of the true nature of Manikkavachakar and Bhagavan Sri Ramana, our eyes are opened to the essential unity of Arunachala and these two great beings who, at the peak of their Realisation, merged in the divine Fire of Knowledge and Love. ▲

⁸ *The Pathway to God* by G. Vanmikanathan, p.214-218. New Delhi, 1971.

⁹ *The Tiruvacagam* by G.U. Pope, p.104ff, Oxford 1900.

¹⁰ *Tiruvammanai* 8.18. See *The Pathway to God* by G. Vanmikanathan p. 238.

¹¹ *A Sadhu’s Reminiscences of Ramana Maharshi*, p. 70, Sri Ramanasramam 1994.



Ulladu Narpadu

Based on Lakshmana Sharma's
Commentary

Verse Eight

S. RAM MOHAN

Adoration of that Nameless and Formless One by any Name and in any Form (as one may choose) is a Means of seeing that One. But the *true* seeing of that Reality is just resolving (in the Natural State) in perfect Union with It by becoming aware of It as one's own Real Self, and thereby merging into It finally.

Commentary

The trinity of the soul, the personal God and the world is a mental creation as they do not appear in the state of deep sleep (*sushupti*). The Reality Consciousness (*sat-chit*) is the only real Self. But the man who, subject to ignorance (*avidya*), regards himself as a soul separate from the Supreme Being, and is therefore entangled in *samsara*. He suffers accordingly and cannot but help conceive that Supreme Spirit as a personal God, the creator and protector of all the souls and the

worlds. And so long as he continues thinking of himself as a 'soul', for him this personal God appears real enough.

In reality this God which he has created in his own image and superimposed on that formless and nameless Supreme Spirit, is unaffected by this superimposition. But that One Reality Consciousness which is the Real Self, becomes for him — because of his own ignorance, something distinct from him, and becomes known to him as 'God'. This ignorant devotee ascribes to It a name and a form and worships and regards It as other than himself. He regards Him as the Lord of all the soul, and the worlds, and as gracious to His devotees. It is right for him to do so, as already stated because that devotion of his confers on him, in the course of time, purity of mind and the capacity for discrimination, and thereby leads him on finally to the experience of the Real Self, which is the Reality.

This is what the Bhagavan teaches in this verse, by the words 'is a means of seeing that One (as He really is)'. Bhagavan has also said that the way to be delivered from the bondage of names and forms is to give names and forms to the Reality and worshipping it as God with devotion.

Since here it is said that any name and any form may be ascribed to the Reality, therefore the devotee can choose whichever is most attractive to himself for his devotion, that is, any one of the recognized forms, such as Siva, Vishnu and others. Since in reality the Brahman is nameless and formless, it is proper to assume that the Brahman will accept whatever name or form is given to It by the devotee. This is true catholicity. Quarrelling with one another, asserting 'My God is great, yours is inferior', is due to immaturity of character and narrowness of mind.

The form that is thus chosen and ascribed to the Brahman may be a mental concept. The Divinity may be invoked and imagined as resident in any object of creation, and worshipped. The object serves as a Symbol of God. Thus the sun, the sky, fire, a mountain or hill (like Arunachala), a sacred river or the like may serve as a symbol of God and an object of worship. Of all the available forms the most suitable and efficacious is the guru who is a sage, a knower, by

experience, of the Real Self; for the sage does not think of himself—the Self — as other than the Supreme Being. Therefore it happens that in the Sri Bhagavad Gita the Lord says: 'The sage (*jnani*) is myself'.

We must regard the sage-guru exactly as he regards himself; that is, we must look upon him as the Supreme Being that dwells inside ourselves as the Real Self. It is a serious mistake to think of him as separate from the Brahman. The sadhaka that has this limited view of him will not attain the experience of the Real Self, until he comes to perceive his error and corrects himself.

Most devotees, who worship the Brahman as a Personal God, do not know that the ultimate goal of life is the Experience of the Real Self; their goal is the *vision* of that particular God-Form to which they are devoted. It is even possible that, due to the fervour and persistence of his devotion, he may have that vision some time or other. But we should remember that the form that is thus seen will also disappear, as it is not real, since the real God is the formless Brahman, which is the Real Self. It will be shown later that the form that is seen in such a vision is only a mental image.

But though the devotee does not want, and does not aim at the final goal, the experience of the Real Self as identical with the true God (Brahman), he will ultimately come to the Real Self. And it has to be said that the cause of his accomplishing it is by divine grace. That grace consists in the fact that the Brahman is the Real Self in his Heart, not something that the devotee thinks it is. Only this experience confers complete satisfaction, so that he will not want anything else. As the Upanishads say, it is the final fulfilment of all his desires.

It is this that constitutes the true vision of God, as Brahman. The last sentence of the translation conveys this sense.

Bhagavan once said that this truth about God vision is illustrated in the story of Prahalada, which appears in *Yoga Vasishtha* which is called in Tamil as *Jnana Vasishtham*.¹

¹ The story of Prahlada also appears in the *Bhagavatam* and other *Puranas*. But the story as given in the *Yogavasishtham* is different from the one given in the *Puranas*.

The story as retold by Bhagavan was as follows :

The father of Prahlada, Hiranyakasipu, had conquered all the three worlds and was thereby persuaded that there was none equal to himself — that he was supreme over all. As a consequence Prahlada had no fear of death. But when his father, Hiranyakasipu, was killed by the great Vishnu, Prahlada began to fear death, thinking that Vishnu could also annihilate him. He became haunted by the fear of death. It occurred to him that he can become free from that fear if he could propitiate Vishnu by becoming His devotee and adoring Him. And he did so by means of worship, *japa*, meditation and the like. In due course Vishnu appeared to him in the form in which He was adored by Prahlada, and told him: “*This Vision is of no use for giving you freedom from death. You must obtain the right vision of the real Vishnu, the One that is realised in you as the Real Self.*”

Vishnu also taught him the practices needed for obtaining that vision and then disappeared. Prahlada followed these injunctions, and thereby obtained the experience of the Real Self—the Real Vishnu — and incidentally, transcended death also. This verse thus confirms the teaching that the Reality is the Real Self. ▲

Tiruvannamalai: The Site and Its Region

JEAN DELOCHE

The following article is the first of a series adapted from TIRUVANNAMALAI Un lieu saint sivaïta du sud de l'Inde Volume 2 L'ARCHEOLOGUE DU SITE by Francosie L'Hernault, Pierre Pichard & Jean Deloche. It is published by De L'Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient Volume CLVI, Paris 1990, Permission has been kindly given by the French Institute of Pondicherry, 11 St. Louis Street, P.B.33, Pondicherry 605001. The translation is by Poornima.

In the Tiruvannamalai district the first traces of habitation which we found were not located in the vicinity of Arunachala, the mountain of Tiruvannamalai. Some tools and prehistoric weapons have been discovered in the Kalrayan hills that proved hunters and *cueilleurs* (gypsies) inhabited those heights. The consolidation which occurred with these relatively permanent communities on the foothills appear to be identified with the Neolithic period.

In the surroundings of Thirukovilur and Gingee, we have found constructions made with large slabs of hewn gneiss, a type of granite stone, sometimes enclosed with one or many circles of erected stone,

inside which they have placed debris of pottery, bones and iron. These monuments which are probably places of selective sculpture represent the first vestiges of a community life.

The religious practices associated with Saivism are among the causes for the rudimentary establishment of civilization which have made possible the development of Tiruvannamalai.

When one considers the religious geography of the region, one notices that two large locally revered rivers are related to the sacred mountain of Tiruvannamalai.

To the south is the Pennaiyar, which is also called Dakshina Pinakini. Every year it receives at Manalurpettai, which is 20 kms to the south, on the 5th day of Thai month, the God *Chandrasekharar* of Tiruvannamalai. Here he is bathed and anointed in the river. To the north, runs the Cheyyar which is also known as the Bahudanadi or Skandanadi and has its source in the hills of Javadu. It annually receives the visit of the God of Tiruvannamalai at Kalasapakkam some 29 km to the north, during the *Saptham*, that is the 7th day after the new moon in the Tamil month of *Marzheri*, (January - February) and is in addition to the *Tirthavari* of *Masi Magha* celebrated near the river Sonadi at Pallikondapatta, on the full moon day in the Tamil month of *Masi* (February-March).

Based on this information it seems these rivers are associated with the Red Mountain, the 'Mysterious and sacred centre of the Heart of Siva' of Tiruvannamalai around which people have practised the same beliefs and rites since time immemorial.

There is a further geographically sacred relationship involving Arunachala and the religious act of circumambulating its base which is called *giripradakshina*.

Unlike many other hills in south India and in particular Tamil Nadu with its proliferation of Murugan temples, there is no established sacred shrine at the summit of this hill nor is there a constructed path or staircase by which the temple down below on the plain is usually united with the temple up high. Here the Arunachala temple is connected to the mountain by the act of traversing its base in one continuous act of

worship. In the myth of Tiruvannamalai, the inselberg¹ considered to be a *linga*, is found at the centre of a ritual circumambulation. This well-accepted route is not to be confused with normal social and commercial activity. It was made solely for religious purposes; a sacred way determined by the density of the supernatural power of Arunachala. The road is well established and well-made. It is lined with important shrines of which some date from the same period as those of the inner sanctum of the temple. The trail is bordered with sacred tanks and other significant halts. The schedule of devotions commences on the east side of the mountain at the *Arunachalaeswar* temple which is the point of departure and the arrival after a complete circuit.

The embryonic seed of the town, Tiruvannamalai, is at this focus point where the beginning and the end of the religious obligations meet at the temple which became the place of encounter and the reference point for pilgrims undertaking the *giripradakshina*.

The original development of the town seems therefore to be a religious one. Dominated by the mountain which is Siva himself, the shrine has been the generator of the town. And the countryside bears the mark of this with its many converging roads.

Due to its larger geographical position the buildup of people was not solely dependent on religious causes. The locality represents a junction for the contact between different regions of the Tamils. The town is situated at the crossing of two great routes.

The first, which goes along the eastern border of the Javadu and Kalvarayan hill-chains, in a direction of a more or less straight meridian, connects the Palar river to the Cauvery river. We find references to this route at different moments in the history of Tamil Nadu. In the Sangam period, the route from Kanchipuram to Karur had to pass in proximity to the mountain of Tiruvannamalai.

In the 13th and 14th Centuries, during the Hoysala period, the sacred town of the valley of the Palar was connected via Tiruvannamalai to

¹ An isolated hill or mountain which rises abruptly from the surrounding landscape, especially from an arid plain. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*.



Kannanur, a provincial capital which is close to Srirangam. At the apogee of the Vijayanagar Empire, in the 16th Century Tiruvannamalai was a religious halt on the highway of the pilgrimage of the south, and, under the Moghuls, it played the role of a garrison-town for the armies, between the citadel of Vellore and the fortresses of Tiyadurga and Tiruchirapalli.

The second route, oriented west-east, leads from the western plain to the coastal plain. It connected the Baramahals to the fortress of Gingee with the large corridor that forms the Basin of Chengam. It was an obligatory passage which seems to have had a considerable strategic importance up to the end of the Mysore battles. Nowhere else in effect, in the Tamil country, has one found as many commemorative steles grouped together in the same place. The proof that the region has been the setting, since ancient times, of struggles and important human movement can be found in the main temple on the various walls. There are thirty *virakal*² from the Pallava period, starting from the 5th to the 9th Century, and fourteen *virakal* from the Chola period of around the 10th Century that celebrate the sacrifices of the local warriors in the raids which were led to recover the stolen cattle or at the time of combat between rival armies.

In the times of the Hoysala, as in the time of Hyder Ali, the armies in order to reach the Tamil country traversed the paths bordering the Pennaiyar and the Cauvery, more than the alternative route through the Palar valley. The Chengam corridor or pass seems to have been a great transit point because it was connected directly via Krishnagiri, to the hill of Budikote which has always been populated up to the colonial period. It is interesting to note that, in the second half of the 13th Century, the Hoysala King Ramanatha established his Capital at Kundani, to the south of this obligatory passage, and this allowed him to control the eastern plains road. Tippu Sultan, at the end of the 18th Century, always used this path which even today bears the name of *dandu oni* or military road.

² Stones which commemorate the valour of a warrior.

It is therefore a position of strategic interest that the kings of south India, in particular the Hoysala Kings, the chiefs of Vijayanagar and the Muslims, knew that they had to utilize its strategic importance. This route had a vitally important commercial role before the establishment of the railways because the entire traffic of salt between the eastern coast and the Baramahals would pass through this area.

According to the temple inscriptions dated from the 14th Century this nexus of Tiruvannamalai was also a military garrison town. The Hoysala king Ballala III, in 1318, made it his capital, from where his chief general embarked upon expeditions to the coastal plain.

It seems possible (though there is no documentary evidence) that this town could have been a frontier post for the Nayaks of Gingee in order to exercise suzerainty. In any case, from the 17th Century, this town is often mentioned in the military annals of South India.

We know that after the capture of Gingee by the troops of Bijapur, their general sent officers to take possession of the *qu'ilab*³ of Tiruvannamalai (C.1650). In 1689, Hariji Raja, the Maratha vice-king of the South, imprisoned a number of individuals there. In 1691, the town was taken by Zulfiquar Khan, the commander-in-chief of the Moghul forces. In 1697, the army of Raja Ram, second son of Shivaji, succeeded in escaping towards the Maratha country by passage through the Tiruvannamalai and Chengam pass.

During the French-English War, its importance did not escape the attention of the French. The Pondicherry Governor Dupleix thought that it was useful to have, beyond Gingee, another point that would hamper the communications of the enemy between Arcot and Tiruchirapalli. Tiruvannamalai was ideally suited to respond to the needs of the situation since it was strategically situated between these two hostile towns. It therefore guaranteed the security and the replenishment of the troops of the company under his command. In spite of their persistent efforts, the French did not succeed in taking the town. The first three

³ Fortress.

attempts that they made (Oct 1752—Jan 1753) ended in failure. They tried again in August-September 1753, aided by Murtaz Ali Khan, but they still failed.

Between 1753 and 1760, the city was subject to repeated attacks by various forces and was conquered many times. In October 1757, the local garrison abandoned the place at the approach of the French army led by Soupir. In August 1758, it was recaptured by Krishna Rao, *qu'ilabder*⁴ of Tiyagadurgam, but, in the following month, a force led by Saubinet succeeded in capturing the place at sword-point. In February 1760, it was captured by the English under Stephen Smith and in August of the same year, was attacked twice without success by the troops of Mysore.

Tiruvannamalai has also played a leading role in the military operations during the Mysore wars, because the kings of Sarangapatnam considered the Chengam pass to be the doorway to the Coromandel plain and they did their best to keep control over it. Twice Hyder Ali had the possible opportunity to block it and prevent the convergence of the troops of Colonel Smith operating in the Baramahals along with those of Colonel Wood coming from Tiruvannamalai and on both occasions, he missed his chance.

At the beginning of the second Mysore war, Hyder Ali again moved his forces there. In 1790 his son, Tippu Sultan, had taken charge of Tiruvannamalai and it was by the same road that in February 1791 he retreated from Pondicherry when he learnt of the march of Cornwallis towards Bangalore.⁵ ▲

⁴ Commander of a fortress.

⁵ It is said that Tippu Sultan was responsible for the planting of many tamarind trees along the route from Pondicherry and Krishnagiri. There is one such large tree at the left hand corner as one enters the ashram through the main entrance. — Editor

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

TIRUCHUZH I LAKSHMI AMMAL

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

I am a native of Tiruchuzhi. I knew Ramana Maharshi when he lived there as a young boy. On a few occasions I would have seen him. Then he went away to Dindigul and Madurai. I also went away from Tiruchuzhi. Years later when I returned to Tiruchuzhi I heard of his discovery at Tiruvannamalai soon after his mother returned therefrom. But though I had regard for him I came to Tiruvannamalai to see him only about ten years ago (this must have been in 1920 or thereabouts). Since then my faith in him increased. I and my sons and relations have come frequently thereafter. From infancy my sons have been going to him. As for any special experience in my visits, I have none. I have not even asked Maharshi questions as a rule. Once or twice I asked him:

L: I am dumb and don't possess much intelligence. What to do?

M: It is good that you know you are dumb. If a fool does not know his foolishness that is wrong. Since you know your state it will disappear by and by.

L: How will it go?

M: You are doing Siva puja, aren't you? That is enough, your dumbness will go through that means.

L: How will I attain a good state?

M: You perform puja till you think it is necessary. Then, when you slowly realize that you and the worshipped God are one and the same, the puja will leave you. ▲



Sri Dakshinamurti Swami

T. V. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN
AND DAVID GODMAN

Tiruvapur Dakshinamurti Swami, a distinguished Tamil saint, was born through the grace of Lord Arunachaleswara. The only available Tamil biography mostly describes the miracles attributed to him, although a few of his teaching statements are also included. This article, based on the Tamil biography, gives the important events in his life and all the teachings found there.

Sri Dakshinamurti Swami was born about 200 years ago in Kilalathur, a small village close to Tiruchi. His parents, Meenambikai and Sivachidambaram Pillai, belonged to the Kar Katta Velalar community, who were traditionally land owners and cultivators. After their marriage they went for many years without having any children. In order to get a child they embarked on a pilgrimage that took them to many of the places that were sacred to Lord Siva, and while they were on this journey they also observed many strict vows. During

their journey they visited Tiruvannamalai, where they spent many days worshipping Annamalaiyar and Unnamulai, performing *pradakshina* of Arunachala and bathing in the holy waters at the foot of the hill.

One night Lord Arunachaleswara appeared simultaneously in their dreams and told them, 'I myself will come to you and remove your mental grief. Return home.'

They were both astonished by this manifestation of grace. The following day they went to the temple, worshipped Arunachaleswara, and then returned to their home town, where they continued to meditate on him.

Ten months later Meenambikai gave birth to a male child. Since he had been born through the grace of Arunachala, he was named 'Arunachalam'. The child soon began to display unusual traits: he never troubled anyone for food; he never cried; he was silent all the time; and he only suckled if his mother directly placed her nipple in his mouth.

While he was growing up, Arunachalam remained silent. He did not utter a single word in the first five years of his life. His parents were so distressed by this they began to pray to God to help them with this matter. To alleviate their distress Lord Arunachaleswara appeared before them in the guise of a Saiva *sannyasin*.

Sivachidambaram Pillai, impressed by the appearance of the *sannyasin*, told him, 'My son, who was born through the grace of Arunachaleswara, has remained completely dumb, even though he is five years old. I request you to make him speak.'

The monk replied, 'Let me see this wonderful child'.

He went inside the house and saw the child sitting in *padmasana*, absorbed in the Self.

The monk told the father, 'This child has come to you as your son to redeem your clan and many other devotees. He is not dumb at all. Speak to your child now.'

Sivachidambaram Pillai immediately asked him, 'Dear child, why do you remain with your eyes closed?'

Arunachalam replied, 'I am remaining still [*summa irukkiren*]'.

The monk then asked, 'Who are you that is remaining still?'

Arunachalam replied, 'You yourself are I, and I myself am you'.

The monk responded by saying '*Satyam, satyam* [true, true],' and then he vanished completely.

As soon as they witnessed this wonder both parents immediately realised that the child and the mysterious *sannyasin* were both Arunachaleswara. From that moment on, they behaved very carefully with their son, conducting themselves as if they were his devotees.

His biography states that many miracles were subsequently attributed to Arunachalam, and they are described in great detail.

Many years later both his father and his mother died at the same time. After performing their funeral rites, Arunachalam left home and became a wandering *sadhu*. Hereafter, we shall just refer to him as 'Swami'.

During his travels Swami reached Tiruvotriyur where he stayed in the *samadhi* shrine of Pattinattar. In the town at that time there was a mad brahmin girl who was behaving in a very inappropriate way. Her father had tried all possible means to bring her back to normal, but nothing had worked.

Finally, he prayed to Siva in the Tiruvotriyur temple and said, 'Cure my daughter of her disease within three days. If you don't, I myself will poison her and kill her.'

That night Siva appeared in the brahmin's dream and said, 'O devotee, there is a *jnana-siddha*, a *jivanmukta*, wandering naked around the *samadhi* of Pattinattar. Take your daughter to him. When he comes out of his inner absorption in the Self and casts his glance on your daughter, her madness will be cured completely.'

The brahmin forcibly took his daughter to the *samadhi* shrine of Pattinattar, where he found Swami in *nishtha*. Some time later Swami came out of his Self-absorption and looked at the girl, who immediately became normal. Showing her gratitude, she walked around Swami and prostrated to him.

Then she addressed him, saying, 'Lord! As a result of your glance, the bodily ailment has left me. Please now bestow your grace so that the disease of birth is also removed.'

Swami responded by saying, 'If you renounce the concepts of *jagat* [world], *jiva* [individual] and *para* [God], which are all known, and

remain as the consciousness that knows them, the disease of *samsara* will cease.’

The girl returned home, shut herself in a room and meditated continuously on the *upadesa* she had received. On the eighth day she attained *videhamukti* [liberation at the moment of death].

Swami later travelled to Karaikkal where a Muslim saint, Mastan Sahib, asked him, ‘What is the state in which you and I can remain as the all-pervasive reality?’

To this Swami replied, ‘If you remain in the state in which objective knowledge – you, I, this and that – is no more, then you can remain as the one, all-pervasive reality.’

Swami’s wandering came to an end when he reached Tiruvarur. He spent the rest of his life there, roaming naked.

A man called Somanatha Mudaliar, who came from Chittoor, had been suffering from a colic that did not respond to any treatment. As a last resort he went to Chidambaram and prayed to Lord Nataraja, asking him to rid him of this suffering.

On the third day of his visit there, when he was unable to bear the pain any longer, he went into the Lord’s presence and said, ‘I cannot bear this pain any more. I am going to kill myself.’

As he was preparing to execute this act, a voice from the shrine said, ‘Your disease will not get cured here. Go to Tiruvarur and pray to Dakshinamurti. You will get immediate and permanent relief. Do not commit suicide.’

Mudaliar went to Tiruvarur and worshipped at the Dakshinamurti shrine in the Tyagaraja temple, but the colic did not subside even a little. Not knowing what to do next, he was totally bewildered.

That night Lord Nataraja appeared as a *sannyasin* in his dream and said to him, ‘This is not the Dakshinamurti I mentioned to you. There is one wandering naked in this place. Go to him instead.’

Early the following morning Mudaliar started searching for Swami by making enquiries about him. He eventually found Swami in the company of dogs, eating food that had been discarded on leaf plates which had been thrown outside a house. Realising that this was the

person he was looking for, Mudaliar prostrated to him with great devotion.

Swami looked at him, placed the food he had in his hand in Mudaliar’s mouth, and asked, ‘Did Natesan [Lord Nataraja] send you here?’

Mudaliar obtained instant and permanent relief from the pain that had been afflicting him for many years. It was only after this event that Swami came to be known as Dakshinamurti Swami, a name given by Lord Nataraja himself.

After this incident Swami’s fame spread far and wide, and many people came to see him. One day the king of Tanjavur, who ruled the area in which Tiruvarur was located, paid a visit to the town to witness the famous car festival. Since he was a great devotee of Swami, he wanted to donate a village to him.

He told one of his officials, ‘Today I would like to have *darshan* of Dakshinamurti Swami and offer him as a gift a village from this area. Choose a suitable village and inform his disciples about this matter.’

The official short-listed a few villages on a chit and showed it to the local tahsildar, saying, ‘Go to Swami’s place and tell his disciples that they should accept one of the villages mentioned in this note when the king comes to see Swami.’

The tahsildar informed a senior disciple of Swami of the king’s wish and gave him the list of villages to choose from. The disciple then took the list to Swami.

However, before he could enter the hall in which Swami was lying on a cot, Swami called out to him, ‘All the worlds are a mere appearance in us, like blue, yellow and other colours in the sky. Someone is gifting a little land and another person is accepting it. Is that person [who accepts] not someone who wants to quench his thirst by drinking mirage water?’

As soon as the disciple heard these remarks he became very afraid. He threw away the note and never discussed it with Swami.

On one occasion a group of brahmin *sannyasins* came to Tiruvarur on a pilgrimage. Though they were aware of the supreme state of Dakshinamurti Swami, they were reluctant to go and see him because

they felt that the traditionalists among the brahmins might find fault with them. So, they were looking for an opportunity for a chance meeting to take place.

During their visit Swami was resting on the stone steps of the famous Kamalalayam tank. The *sannyasins* heard about this and, on the pretext of doing *pradakshina* of the tank, went to the place where Swami was lying. When they arrived, they saw Swami lying on the stone steps, indifferent to the hot sunshine.

Overwhelmed by the divine appearance of Swami, the chief *sannyasin* thought to himself, 'Won't it be more comfortable if Swami lies in the shade of a tree?'

Responding to his unspoken thought, Swami replied, 'Can an insentient tree offer comfort to the Self, which is consciousness? If it can, then mirage water will cool a hot region. The origin of the perception of differences is the absence of *jnana drishti* [true vision].'

The *sannyasins* took this as *upadesa* and were immensely pleased by this statement.

A few days before his *maha samadhi* Swami exclaimed, 'Finished! Finished! Completely finished!' and withdrew into a state of *nishtha* [absorption in the Self]. He attained *maha samadhi* towards the end of August 1835 and his *samadhi* shrine is located at Madappuram in Tiruvarur. ▲

Approaches to the Study of Sankara

Part One

JONATHAN BADER

This series of articles on Sankara has been adapted by the author from his Meditation and Sankara's Vedanta published by Aditya Prakshan Publications, 2/18 Ansari Road, Delhi. Their email address is contact@bibliaimpex.com

In 1952 the eminent Sanskrit scholar, Professor Ingalls called attention to the need for new efforts in the application of historical methods to the study of Sankara.¹ He suggested that the philosophical analysis of Sankara's thought could not proceed much further without the assistance of historical study. At this very time two other scholars, Hacker and Nakamura, were engaged in research which was to give new direction to the study of Sankara.

Prior to the publication of several important papers by the late Paul Hacker, there was much uncertainty as to which of the several hundred compositions traditionally ascribed to Sankara could be regarded as genuine. The one notable exception is the *Brahmasutra*

¹ *The Study of Sankaracharya*, p. 5.

commentary which is, by definition, the work of Sankara. This commentary (*bhasya*) represents his *magnum opus* and serves as the measure against which other works attributed to him may be placed. Ingalls, for instance, had accepted only three other works, based on the testimony of Sankara's direct disciples. The existence of Suresvara's expositions (*varttika-s*) is certainly strong evidence that two of Sankara's Upanishad commentaries, the *Taittiriya* and *Bṛhadaranyaka*, are genuine. Likewise, in his *Naiskarmya-siddhi*, Suresvara's numerous citations of the *Upadesasahasri* suggest the authenticity of this independent treatise of Sankara's. But clearly, other criteria are needed here.

The first breakthrough in establishing further criteria came with Hacker's discovery of a significant pattern occurring in the colophons of Sankara's compositions. Those works likely to be genuine (by comparison with the *Brahmasutra-bhasya*), he found, tended to be ascribed to Sankara-Bhagavat. On the other hand, those whose authorship seemed doubtful were usually attributed to Sankaracarya.² The very designation *Sankaracarya* can indeed be a source of some confusion. For this title may apply equally to any of the pontiffs of the five monastic centres traditionally regarded as having been established by Sankara.

Hacker next devised a more substantial methodology based on a careful analysis of Sankara's use of certain technical terms. He discovered Sankara's understanding of *avidya*, *namarupa*, *maya*, and *isvara* to be quite distinct from that of his followers. Accordingly, an examination of these terms becomes the focal point in a procedure which Hacker believes to work as "a sieve with a mesh wide enough to let pass spurious works and close enough to retain or admit even variations or development among authentic ones."³ Hacker's conclusion is that only

² The honorific *acharya*, generally denotes a teacher or spiritual preceptor. The title *Bhagavat* has a connotation something like that of 'Most Reverend'. Sankara is also referred to by his disciples as *Bhagavatpada* (lit. 'whose feet are holy') or *Bhagavat-pujya-pada* ('whose feet are to be worshipped').

³ *Sankara der Yogin*, p.147.

one independent treatise, the *Upadesasahasri*, can properly be attributed to Sankara. The rest of his genuine compositions consist wholly of commentaries. These include his *bhasya-s* on the *Brahmasutra*, the *Bhagavadgita*, and ten Upanishads: *Bṛhadaranyaka*, *Chandogya*, *Isa*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Taittiriya*, *Aitareya*, *Mundaka*, *Mandukya* (including the *Gaudapadiya-karika*), and *Prasna*. Hacker also recognizes the commentaries on the *Yogasutra-bhasya* of Vyasa and the *Adhyatmapatala* of the *Apastamba-dharmasutra*.

Both Ingalls and Hajime Nakamura have utilised Bhaskara's commentary on the *Brahmasutra* as the key to distinguishing Sankara's thought from that of earlier Vedantins. Bhaskara's commentary appears to have been written in the period immediately following Sankara's death, circa A.D. 750.⁴

What is remarkable about this work is its striking similarity to Sankara's *bhasya*. This is despite substantial differences in the viewpoints of the two commentators. Indeed Bhaskara is sharply critical of Sankara. Ingalls cites an appropriate illustration in Bhaskara's remark on Sankara's concept of liberation: "Some of us would rather be jackals in the forest than have your kind of release."⁵ In view of such marked antipathy, it seems highly unlikely that Bhaskara would imitate Sankara. Yet there are numerous occasions where nearly identical passages occur in both commentaries. This would suggest that both are relying on an earlier interpreter. Ingalls calls this as yet unidentified Vedantin the 'Proto-commentator'.⁶ It appears that Bhaskara's criticism is concentrated on those very points where Sankara tends to differ from the Proto-commentator. From his reading of the *Brahmasutra-s* and a close

⁴ Until fairly recently it was generally accepted that Sankara's dates were A.D. 788-820. Nakamura has argued that the dates should be pushed back to 700-750 (Hajime Nakamura, *An History of Early Vedanta Philosophy*, Pt. 1, Delhi, 1983, p.87. The original Japanese publication was 1950-56). Ingalls and Karl Potter have largely accepted Nakamura's dates; but there are other scholars who do not. Vetter, for example, maintains that we cannot at present ascribe more precise dates than 650-800 (*Studien*, p.11).

⁵ D. Ingalls, *The Study of Samkaracarya*, p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

examination of the two commentaries, Nakamura concludes that where the two differ, Bhaskara's is probably closer to the original meaning of the *sutra-s*.⁷

Whether Bhaskara's comment actually tallies with the 'original' meaning of the *Brahmasutra*, or merely represents an earlier interpretation of the work,⁸ it does provide a strong indication of the points at which Sankara has developed his own line of thought.

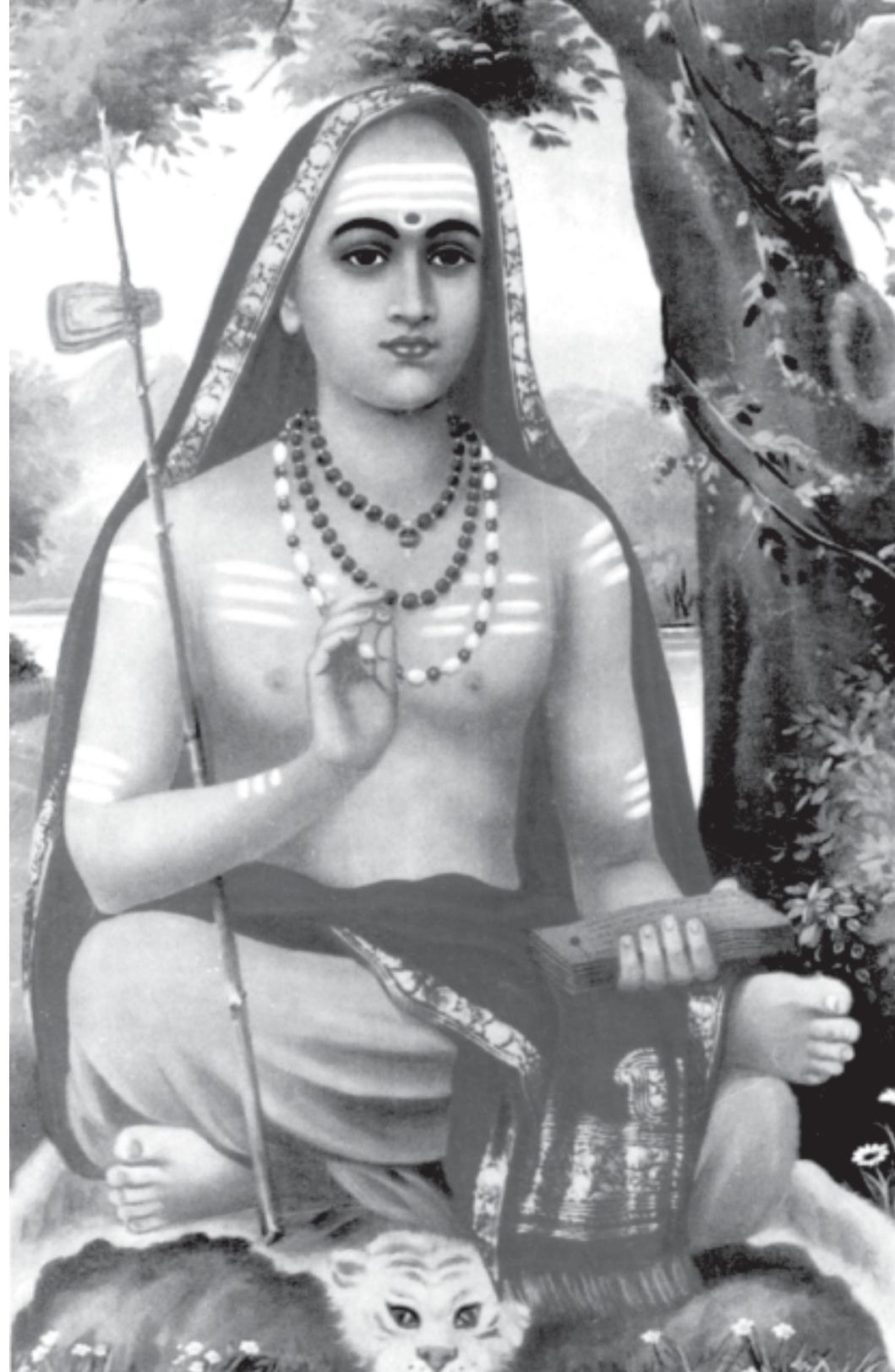
Ingalls has enumerated three fundamental approaches to Sankara's work: the traditional, the historical, and the philosophical. Most of the available material on Sankara is philosophically oriented. More often than not, the approach is that of comparative philosophy. Sankara's work has been compared with a wide range of philosophers—both ancient and modern including Plato, Plotinus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Kant, Fichte, and Bradley.

Some of the more recent work on Sankara has followed an historical approach. Among the most notable scholars here are Hacker, Nakamura, Ingalls, and Vetter. In spite of the substantial contribution of these scholars, there remain some serious draw-backs in the application of historical methods to the study of Sankara. The identification of his authentic works may tend to stifle interest in some important texts. In Western academic circles the *Vivekacudamani*, for instance, is discounted as a genuine composition of Sankara's. Yet within the Advaita school this text is highly respected and is accepted as an integral part of the tradition. For the scholar, this text presents a wealth of significant philosophical material. It contains what is perhaps the most extensive discussion to be found on the five *kola-s*, a characteristic meta-physical doctrine of Vedanta.⁹ While the historian and philosopher may be tempted to simply reject the *Vivekachudamani* as a 'spurious' work, one studying the traditional approach has little choice

⁷ *A History of Early Vedanta*, p.459.

⁸ An adherent of Advaita Vedanta would argue that Sankara has rediscovered the 'original' meaning of the *sutra-s*. It might also be questioned that the Proto-commentator is necessarily representative of the earliest interpretation of the *sutra-s*.

⁹ The *kola-s*, described in *Taittiriya Upanishad* 2.1 ff., are sheaths which are said to encase the Self in layers of increasing degrees of subtlety.



but to examine it closely. This medieval text which is not only philosophically coherent, but profound in its interpretation of Vedanta, cannot be so lightly dismissed. The question of authorship takes its place here as just one of several issues the text raises.¹⁰ Another shortcoming found in some historical studies is the tendency to fragment an otherwise unified text. The *Yogasutra* is one work that has suffered at the hands of several different assailants. Staal has shown how mutually contradictory the various attempts at the dissection of this text have been.¹¹

Sankara's work may also meet a similar fate. In the course of his careful study, which attempts to chart the development of Sankara's thought, Tilmann Vetter¹² finds that the chronological order in which the prose chapters of the *Upadesahasri* were written differs from the sequence in which they appear in the various recensions of the text. He argues that the material in the first chapter represents a later trend of thought than that of

¹⁰ In India, it is now common practice to refer to 'Adi-Sankaracharya' literally 'the original Sankara', in order to distinguish him from the numerous later Sankaracharyas. While Adi-Sankaracharya no doubt holds a very special place in the Indian tradition, the other Sankaracharyas are held in no less esteem. In the eyes of the traditionalists, there may not be much difference between Sankara's own works and those which he has inspired or prompted others to write. In the literature of India there are numerous instances where a work is 'dictated' by a divine personage. We are inclined to regard with a fair degree of scepticism the belief that one and the same man could have written some three hundred works, many of which express widely diverging views. Yet this is not necessarily a problem in the eyes of the traditionally-minded. The fact that he was so prolific in his short lifetime and could give expression to so broad a spectrum of religious orientations, is taken as further proof of his divine power. Nowadays traditional scholars present two arguments justifying the ascription of such diverse works to Sankara. The most common of these is that Sankara, in his compassion for the ordinary man, wrote works suited to various levels of comprehension. T.M.P. Mahadevan proposes another explanation: he suggests that in order to spread the message of Advaita, Sankara utilised the terminology of other schools in order to appeal to their adherents. This would account for the fact that the *Daksinamurti-stotra*, to cite one example, is written in the language of Kashmiri Saivism. See T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Sankaracharya*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 38.

¹¹ Frits Staal, *Exploring Mysticism* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 90 ff.

¹² *Studien zur Lehre und Entwicklung Sankaras*, Vienna 1979 p.75.

the second chapter. It is probably not Vetter's intention to fragment the *Upadesahasri gadyabandha* (prose portion). His findings, however, could be all too easily stretched towards the conclusion that this text is nothing more than a batch of unrelated short compositions.

Surely the project of tracing the development of Sankara's thought does have its own valid sphere of application. But it is essential that we do not lose sight of the fact that such a methodology represents only one approach among many. Even if we do accept Vetter's conclusions, there is no reason why the *Upadesahasri gadyabandha* cannot still be regarded as a coherent text. Indeed, it is well recognised within the Advaita tradition that the work's three chapters have been intentionally arranged so as to correspond to the threefold process of *sravana-manana-nididhyasana*. Whether Sankara actually composed the three *prakarana*-s with this in mind, or whether the arrangement was the later work of his disciples, it is clear that the *Upadesahasri gadyabandha* can stand as a unified work.

Just as an exclusively historical perspective has its limitations, so too does the purely philosophical approach. To begin with, there is not much justification for the assumption that Sankara was first and foremost a philosopher. On the contrary, "He concentrates on what he considers the heart of the matter, the teaching that is necessary for *moksa*... His followers, while deeply attracted by this attitude, were forced to construct a metaphysical system that is in all respects logically coherent."¹³

This is not to say that metaphysics were unimportant for Sankara. It is simply that he did not see the development of a metaphysical system as an end in itself. The point is that liberation (*moksa*) is at the very apex of Sankara's metaphysical thought. He maintains that release from the rounds of transmigration is the direct result of the intuitive knowledge (*anubhava*) of Brahman. This ultimate reality is expressed in the *mahavakya* 'Thou art that', indicating the essential unity of the Self with Brahman. Where Sankara's emphasis on liberation is regarded

¹³ Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "Sankara on the Question: Whose is Avidya", *Philosophy East West*, 3 (1953), p. 72.

primarily as a religious concern, it is not surprising to find that the subject is overlooked in favour of his discussion of more concrete philosophical issues. His role as an exegete is also glossed over by many of his philosophically oriented admirers. This is ostensibly to forestall the possibility that Sankara's work be denigrated as mere scholasticism or theology, neither of which are very fashionable in the eyes of contemporary philosophers.

In order to properly investigate Sankara's teachings on liberation it is necessary to take into account the traditional approach. Unfortunately, this has often been the exclusive domain of apologists whose appearance on the academic stage serves neither to illuminate the profundity of Sankara's thought, nor to reflect the Advaitin's way of life. Strictly speaking, this approach is for the practitioner, not the academic. Before embarking on the traditional path, the aspirant must have first demonstrated to the teacher that he has no taste for the pleasures of worldly life, his only desire being that of attaining liberation. The practice consists in the threefold discipline alluded to above. In brief, this involves (i) hearing the traditional teachings as imparted by the guru, (ii) reflecting deeply on the meaning of what has been heard until it is firmly grasped by the intellect, and (iii) utilising the insights of the intellect in a special sort of meditation whose aim is to remove all trace of the ignorance which obscures the true nature of the Self. Clearly, this method is suitable only for the dedicated and true believer. Still, there is no good reason for ignoring this approach in the course of one's study. On the contrary, an examination of Sankara's work which takes into account the perspective of the practitioner may well cast further light on the motives underlying the formulation of his Advaita doctrine.

Bearing in mind all these considerations, there seems good reason to follow the lead of Ingalls in acknowledging the value in all three approaches. In this series of essays, however, particular emphasis will be placed on the traditional mode. It is hoped that a focus on the practical side of Sankara's teachings will provide access to some areas of his thought which have thus far been explored by few outside the fold of his followers. ▲

VERSE

ALAN JACOBS

Self Realisation is Not

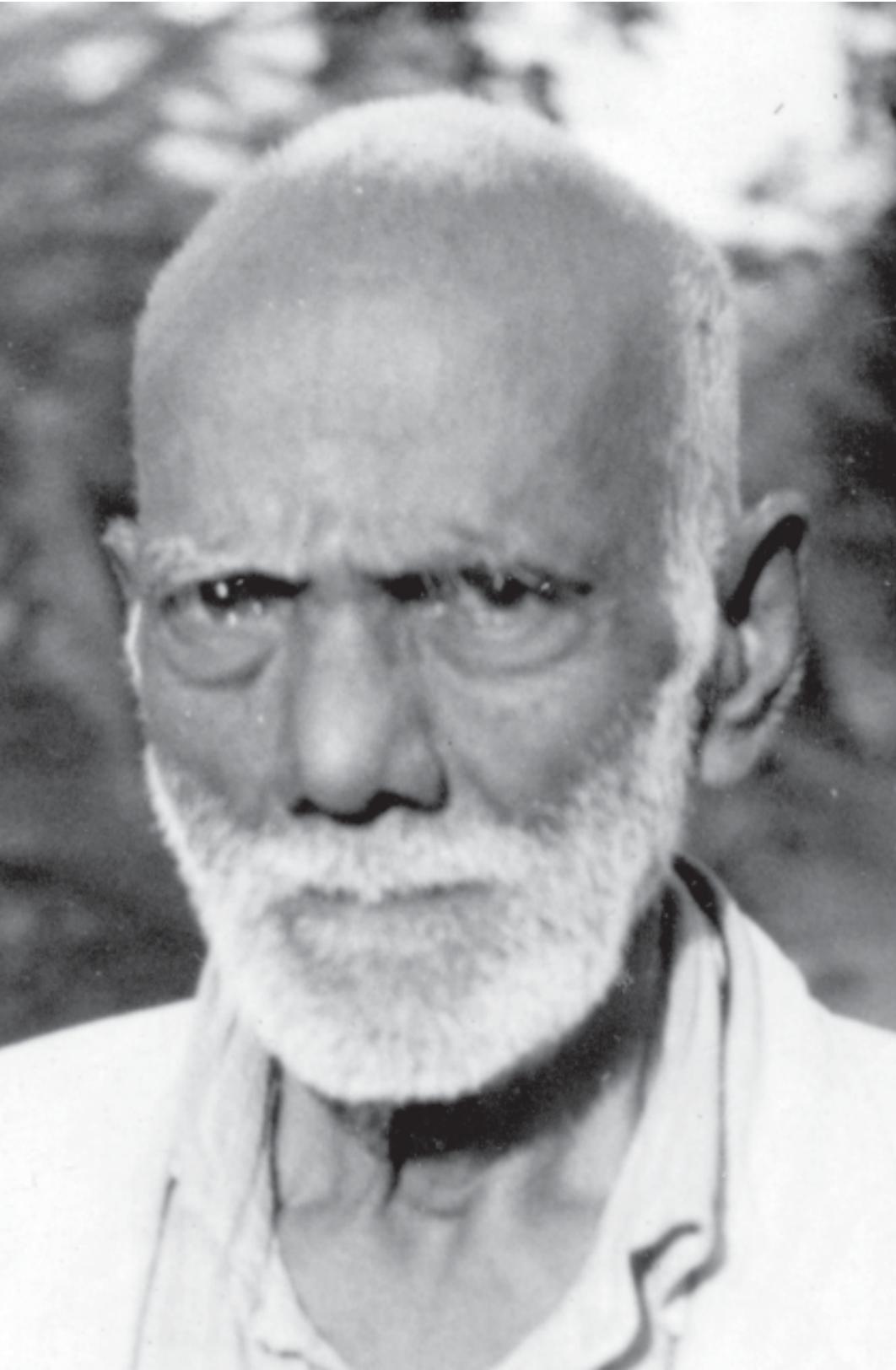
Self Realisation is not this, a goal to be attained,
 Not an empty vacuous frisson of mystic bliss.
 Realisation is not a place to be maintained.
 Self Realisation is not this.
 It's no greed for possessions, passionate, sealed with a kiss,
 Nor any conceptual notion, in mind retained,
 And not is Self a half-baked theorem wildly amiss.

It is not priggish righteousness, moral, chaste, unstained,
 Not a state of mind you wish hurriedly to dismiss.
 It is no god of earthly clay to claim and be detained,
 Self Realisation is not this.

Divine Archery

Into a quiver we were quickly packed by God
 The great giver of grace to our earth clod,
 He would hone us, arrow sharp, to hit the mark.
 He enters, bone, soul and marrow, to fire His spark
 Dormant in our heart, then fan it into flame.
 Such is the power and glory of His holy Name. ▲

From *Myrobalan of the Magi* by Alan Jacobs, privately printed.



HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

An Early Devotee

RAMASWAMI PILLAI

This article was written in January 1930. We have made a number of grammatical changes.

I first came to the Maharshi, immediately after my final school examinations were completed in March 1917. At this time I used to think of my mother, my father, and Bhagavan a lot. I was doing japa by chanting the name of God, Lord Vishnu as Narayana.

The first time I saw Bhagavan was at Skandasramam and I fancied I was seeing a royal hunter in the forest; his personality was striking and I thought of him as this hunter hunting down the senses. My first visit was for one or two days, but no conversation passed between us; our eyes alone met. Directly when I saw him the impact was so great that I gave up my previous Narayana japa. On this visit I met one Sri Narayana Reddiar and he gave me a copy of *The Marital Garland*. After departing the Maharshi's presence, I used to recite these verses aloud or occasionally silently within the mind, identifying Arunachala with the Maharshi. I kept in touch with the Maharshi by writing

occasional letters to Narayana Reddiar to which he would reply giving me details of the Maharshi and the ashram.

After my initial visit, I did not return for a couple of years. When I eventually did, I was able to go around the mountain several times with the Maharshi on his pradakshinas. Each time we went, we would all sing *The Marital Garland*. We also sang the *Song of the Pappadam*, and on our slow walk around the hill, or when we halted at Gautama Ashram, we would ask him to explain the words in the song.

About this time I had a family tragedy: my mother committed suicide owing to a disagreement with my father, and obviously as a young man I felt the loss very deeply.

I went to college at Pachaiappa from 1917-1922, losing one year because of a failure in my intermediate year. In February 1921, I joined the Non-Co-operation Movement against the British. Still feeling very depressed about the loss of my mother, I remember writing to Narayana Reddiar to try and discover her condition as a spirit. I never received a reply to that particular letter, but in the course of time, my grief lessened and eventually disappeared. During this time also, I was feeling very guilty about my sexual desires, although they did not amount to anything like a crime or a serious sin. Narayana Reddiar gave me some advice in his letters, but the problem persisted until I visited Bhagavan in 1919 and confessed my failures to him. From that point on, I was never again troubled by my desires.

I was still very much attracted to *The Marital Garland*, and in addition to memorizing it, I wrote it out again and again. I was still involved with the Non Co-operation Movement, and while still at the ashram I cast lots, thinking of Bhagavan, trying to decide whether I should continue to 'Non Co-operate'. I stayed at the ashram for fifteen days. I did not consult my father, but I informed him of my decision about quitting college again. During this visit I met Sivaprakasam Pillai and Ganapati Muni for the first time. After some time my father came to see what was detaining me and, after taking advice in the ashram, I went back to my village where in 1921, I was married. I found married life very disagreeable, and in June 1922, I

returned to the ashram, arriving at 6 a.m. to find Bhagavan, Dandapani Swami and Chinna Swamy. On this occasion, I stayed for one or two months doing all kinds of odd jobs. Dandapani Swami wanted me to go fund-raising with him for the ashram, but I declined because I preferred doing service in the ashram itself. I remained in the ashram during his absence for one year, looking after the management with Chinna Swamy, and keeping the accounts. During this period, over Rs.2,000 were spent on clearing and levelling the ground in and around the ashram buildings.

That year was the best so far in my spiritual life – months at a stretch were spent in Bhagavan's company with frequent opportunities to walk around the mountain with him. It was a period of intense activity, for we were working night and day to clear the stones, and Bhagavan used often to join us and give us a hand.

After ten months of ashram life I left for my village, though returning frequently to visit him. During my visits sometimes I used to concentrate on Bhagavan's face in the middle of the night, and usually I would see a halo of flowing glorious light in all the seven colours of the rainbow. These visions reminded me of a royal figure from the time of the Moghuls. This happened to me several times, but mostly, they happened during my early visits in 1921 or before.

Bhagavan's inner personality used to manifest on important occasions like Kartika Deepam, Jayanti, Mahasivaratri and his Mother's Mahapuja – also when old and staunch devotees came to see him. It was on such occasions that we saw his light especially shining on us; he would be all love, mercy and grace. He would be our model and exemplar, a light for us to be guided by. In 1923 on the first Sivaratri when I was with him, Bhagavan did not start out to walk around the mountain, as was his usual custom. Everyone else went around the hill, and only four of us stayed with him. Dandapani, Viswanathan, myself and one other devotee sat with him all through the Sivaratri night. We were all awake throughout the night in a blissful state impossible to express in words.

From my experience, the best way to communicate with Bhagavan was to gaze into his eyes when he was in the silent samadhi state.

Then, peace of mind came spontaneously, and the inward search was made much easier. When he was in such a state, merely to be near him was to experience pure happiness.

Even in his absence, or even when I was away from the ashram, I used to think of his person and of his name, and I would experience the sinking of all thoughts into the Self. During one stay of two months at the ashram, we read the *Ribhu Gita* often. There would usually be six or seven of us, including Bhagavan, and we each read a few verses in turn, going all the way through the book until we had finished the complete book. Bhagavan used to tell us, and on occasions we felt and experienced it, that to read the *Ribhu Gita* is to be in samadhi. Viswanathan, Muruganar, Chinna Swamy and anyone else who was present would sit together in a ring with Bhagavan and take it in turns to read. No other book was read so often, but sometimes we would vary our reading by going through the *Tiruvachakam* and the works of Thayumanavar. Sometimes Bhagavan himself would read out three or four stanzas from a work, and then explain the meaning to us. In addition to the readings, we often chanted certain works in his presence. Apart from the *Hymns to Arunachala*, we frequently recited the *Dakshinamurthi Ashtakam* in his presence. As soon as his new works, *Upadesa Saram* and *Reality in Forty Verses* were composed, we all learned them by heart in all the four languages in which he had composed them. On other occasions we would recite stanzas written in praise of him, usually by Muruganar, Sivaprakasam Pillai and the Tamil pundit, T R Ramachandra Iyer.

To me, he is still more than father, mother, king, country, guru and God. ▲

Bhagavan, Manikkavachakar and the Tiruvachakam

Part One

ROBERT BUTLER,
T. V. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN
AND DAVID GODMAN

In this article the authors' comments will be in italics. The extracts from Sri Ramanasramam books that speak of Manikkavachakar and the translated verses from *Tiruvachakam* and other works will all be in roman type.

Introduction

In the seventh to ninth centuries AD there appeared in South India an upsurge of devotional fervour that completely transformed the religious inclinations and practices of the region. Vaishnava and Saiva bhaktas became infused with a religious spirit that emphasised ecstatic devotion to a personal deity rather than the more sober rites and rituals of vedic Brahmanism. It was both a populist Hindu revolt, since it expressed the people's dissatisfaction with the hierarchies of caste,¹ and a

¹ In the *Periyapuranam*, which chronicles the lives of sixty-three of these Saiva bhaktas, at least forty were non-brahmins, and one was an outcaste.

demonstration of contempt for the alien philosophies of Jainism and Buddhism, which had by then permeated large areas of South India.

The movement's leaders were the various saints who toured the countryside singing songs in praise of their personal God. The language of these songs was deliberately simple, for they were intended to be sung by ordinary devotees, either alone or in groups. While it is true that the deities addressed were ones such as Vishnu and Siva, who were prominent components of the North Indian pantheon, the mode of expression and the philosophical content of the poems were unique, being an expression of the indigenous Tamil spirit and culture. This was the first of the great bhakti movements that were to invigorate the Hindu tradition throughout India in the succeeding centuries. It was so successful in transforming the hearts and minds of the South Indian population, one commentator has gone so far as to say that these poet-saints 'sang Buddhism and Jainism out of South India'.²

The Saiva revival of this era owed much to four poet-saints who are often collectively referred to as 'the four' (Nalvar). Appar, the first to emerge, flourished from the end of the sixth century until the middle of the seventh. Tirujnanasambandar, the next to appear, was a younger contemporary of his. They were followed by Sundaramurti (end of the seventh century until the beginning of the eighth) and Manikkavachakar, whom most people believe lived in the ninth century.

The spontaneous songs of these early Saiva saints were eventually collected and recorded in a series of books called the Tirumurais. The first seven (there are twelve in all) are devoted exclusively to the songs of Tirujnanasambandar, Appar, and Sundaramurti, which are known as the Tevarams, while the eighth contains Manikkavachakar's two extant works. These twelve Tirumurais, along with the later Meykanda Sastras, became the canonical works of the southern Saiva branch of Hinduism.

² *Hymns to the Dancing Siva*, by Glen Yocum, 1982 ed., p. 40. Adi-Sankaracharya, who taught in South India in the ninth century, successfully vanquished the Jains and the Buddhists in philosophical debates, but at the grass-roots level it was the singing saints who reconverted the masses back to Hinduism.

This system of beliefs and practices is still the most prevalent form of religion in Tamil Nadu.

Though two of Manikkavachakar's works survive and are both included in the Saiva canon, his justly deserved fame and reputation as being one of the foremost Tamil saints and poets rest almost exclusively on the eminence of the Tiruvachakam.

All devout Saivas are familiar with the major events of the saint's life and most of them would be able to recognise or even repeat many of the verses that comprise the Tiruvachakam. In style it has much in common with the earlier Tevaram poetry of Appar, Jnanasambandar and Sundaramurti, but there are also substantial differences. The Tiruvachakam is a very personal document, for it reveals far more about its author and his varying states of mind than the Tevarams do. It is also more philosophical. Manikkavachakar, being an educated brahmin, quite naturally used technical religious terms to describe his relationship with Siva and the problems he was encountering in his attempts to attain union with Him. This technical vocabulary was elaborated on some centuries later by the Saiva philosophers who formulated and codified the Saiva Siddhanta school of thought. The Tiruvachakam can therefore be viewed as a bridge or link in the development of South Indian religious thought: it is the continuation and the culmination of the bhakti tradition founded by the Tevaram authors, while at the same time it marks the beginning of the Siddhanta philosophical tradition that was to find its ultimate fruition several centuries later in the Meykanda Sastras.

The Tiruvachakam is, and has been for more than a thousand years, one of the most well-known and best-loved works of Tamil devotional literature. It is so highly regarded that extracts from it are chanted every day in many South Indian homes and temples. Portions of the Tiruvachakam were chanted regularly during the early days of Sri Ramanasramam, and on the evening that his mother died in 1922, Ramana Maharshi asked some of the assembled devotees to spend the night chanting the whole work. Kunju Swami, who was present on that occasion, has described what happened:

During the night Sri Bhagavan sat near the place where we had put the Mother's body. Brahmachari Arunachala Swami

and I sat with him. Brahmachari Arunachala Swami had originally been a cook in the big temple in town before he renounced the world and became a devotee of Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan then announced that the *Tiruvachakam* should be chanted. Sri Bhagavan and the devotees took it in turn to read from the book. While we were reading Sri Bhagavan corrected all the mistakes in our reading as and when we made them. In this way we went through the entire *Tiruvachakam* before 4 a.m.³

There were several occasions on which Bhagavan expressed his high opinion of the Tiruvachakam. Viswanatha Swami has reported the following incident:

While Sri Bhagavan was living in Virupaksha Cave, devotees requested him to compose a hymn that could be sung when they went out for *bhiksha*. Sri Bhagavan said, 'When there are so many excellent hymns such as the *Tevarams* and the *Tiruvachakam*, where is the need for a new one?'⁴

Muruganar has also recorded Bhagavan's opinion in three of his Padamalai verses:

Manikkavachakar's *Tiruvachakam* expresses in words the exuberant, graceful experience of *Sivam*, which transcends speech.

Tiruvachakam is a work that deserves to be experienced. The meaning of its sweet verses is beyond intellectual knowledge.

The *Tiruvachakam* is a sea of divine honey expressing the God-experience that puts an end to the birth-misery of getting caught in the womb.⁵

Bhagavan's appreciation was more than intellectual. When he read out portions of the text for the benefit of visitors, he was sometimes moved

³ *The Power of the Presence*, part two, p. 43.

⁴ From Viswanatha Swami's preface to Muruganar's *Aksharamanamalai Vritti Urai*, p. i.

⁵ *Padamalai*, p. 355. In the original Tamil text these are verses 1296, 1295, and 1325.



to tears by Manikkavachakar's experiences and by his poetic expression of the divine love he felt for Siva:

At my request he [Bhagavan] recited certain lines from the composition of the saint Manikkavachakar where the author spoke of the condition of the soul melted in love; hardly had the Maharshi pronounced a few lines when there was a brilliance in his face. He who rarely expresses in any outward form his inner emotion could not restrain a few silent tears. A slanting ray of the morning sun from the hillside made the scene still more vivid. A peace that passeth all understanding pervaded the whole atmosphere. For more than an hour there was perfect silence. It looked as if one of the fresco paintings of Ajanta had come to life!⁶

*A similar incident took place on June 22nd, 1939, when Bhagavan announced that it was Manikkavachakar's Guru puja or aradhana day. Having made the announcement, Bhagavan 'sat in deep silence for so long that the sanctity of the occasion sank into our souls.'*⁷

Bhagavan was not alone in his tearful response to hearing or reading Manikkavachakar's words. In the thousand or so years that have passed since the verses were composed, the words of the Tiruvachakam have moved successive generations of devotees in the same way. Sivaprakasa Swamikal, a distinguished Tamil poet and saint who composed Sonasaila Malai, a hundred-verse poem in praise of Arunachala, summed up the feelings of those who had been stirred by this work when he wrote:

If you were to ask which was the more glorious:
the words of the *Vedas*,
which are said to be
the utterances of the three-eyed One [Siva],
He who is the universal Cause,

⁶ *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 'The Vedantic Tradition in Sri Ramana Maharshi', by Swami Siddheswarananda, 1995 ed., p. 44.

⁷ *Sri Ramana Reminiscences*, by G. V. Subbaramayya, 1967 ed., p. 57.

and who has a body that is shared
with his beautiful bejewelled Consort,

or

the honeyed words that sprang
from the flower-like mouth
of Vadavur's Lord [Manikkavachakar],
who extolled the greatness of Siva,
the Supreme Being,

[this is how you would know:]

here upon this crowded earth
we have never observed
that the hearts of those present
soften and melt,
whilst tears flood their eyes,
when the *Vedas* are chanted.
Yet, if the *Tiruvachakam* is recited but once,
there are none whatsoever
whose hearts will not melt and flow,
be they hard as granite blocks,
whose eyes will not fill up with tears,
like water seeping into a hole
dug in the wet sand,
who will not tremble and quiver,
the hair of their body standing on end,
and who will not become His devotees!⁸

Manikkavachakar's life and experiences

The oldest record of Manikkavachakar's life comes from the Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam, a text that narrates the divine events that are associated with the Madurai Temple. Four chapters from this work, fifty-eight to sixty-one, are devoted to the story of Manikkavachakar. When Suri Nagamma professed ignorance of the details of Manikkavachakar's life, Bhagavan

⁸ 'Nalvar Nanmani Malai', v. 4. All the translations of poems that have no published references were done by the authors of this article.

responded by giving a detailed summary of the events that the Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam has recorded:

Bhagavan: Manikkavachakar was born in a village called Vaadavur (Vaatapuri) in Pandya Desha. Because of that people used to call him Vaadavurar [The man from Vaadavur]. He was put to school very early. He read all the religious books, absorbed the lessons therein, and became noted for his devotion to Siva, as also his kindness to living beings. Having heard about him, the Pandya king sent for him and made him his prime minister and conferred on him the title of Thennavan Brahmarayan, i.e., 'Premier among Brahmins of the South'. Though he performed the duties of a minister with tact and integrity, he had no desire for material happiness. His mind was always absorbed in spiritual matters. Feeling convinced that for the attainment of *jnana*, the grace of a Guru was essential, he kept on making enquiries about it.

Once the Pandya king ordered the minister to purchase some good horses and bring them to him. As he was already in search of a Guru, Manikkavachakar felt that it was a good opportunity and started with his retinue carrying with him the required amount of gold. As his mind was intensely seeking a Guru, he visited all the temples on the way. While doing so he reached a village called Tirupperundurai. Having realised the maturity of the mind of Manikkavachakar, Parameswara [Siva, had] assumed the form of a schoolteacher and for about a year before that had been teaching poor children in the village seated on a street pial near the temple. He was taking his meal in the house of his pupils every day by turn. He ate only cooked green vegetables. He was anxiously awaiting the arrival of Manikkavachakar. By the time Manikkavachakar actually came, Iswara assumed the shape of a *Siddha Purusha* [realised soul] with many *sannyasis* around him and was seated under a kurundai tree within the compound of the temple. Vaadavurar came to the temple, had *darshan* of the Lord in it, and while going round the temple by way of *pradakshina*, saw the *Siddha Purusha*. He

was thrilled at the sight, tears welled up in his eyes and his heart jumped with joy. Spontaneously his hands went up his head in salutation and he fell down at the feet of the Guru like an uprooted tree. Then he got up and prayed that he, a humble being, may also be accepted as a disciple. Having come down solely to bestow grace on him, Iswara, by his look, immediately gave him *jnana upadesa* [initiation into true knowledge]. That *upadesa* took deep roots in his heart, and gave him indescribable happiness. With folded hands and with joyful tears, he went round the Guru by way of *pradakshina*, offered salutations, stripped himself of all his official dress and ornaments, placed them near the Guru and stood before him with only a kaupina on. As he felt like singing in praise of the Guru, he sang some devotional songs, which were like gems. Iswara was pleased, and addressing him as 'Manikkavachakar' [meaning 'one whose speech is gems'] ordered him to remain there itself worshipping him. Then he vanished.⁹

Manikkavachakar's experiences with Siva, his Guru, left him in a state of irrepressible ecstasy. Many of his songs described this momentous encounter, but there was one particular sequence of lines from the poem 'Tiruvandappahudi' that Bhagavan particularly appreciated. Devaraja Mudaliar has reported¹⁰ that Bhagavan read out lines 149-182 to give him 'an idea of the supreme bliss of Self-realisation'.

In Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk 215, it is recorded that Bhagavan read from G. U. Pope's English translation the Tiruvachakam. In this report it merely states that Bhagavan read 'stanzas describing the intense feeling of bhakti as thrilling the whole frame, melting the flesh and bones, etc.'. Though the exact reference is not given, Viswanatha Swami, in the Tamil edition of Talks, states that it is this portion which is being referred to:

Clad graciously in a brahmin's glorious form,
He summoned me and graciously ruled me.

⁹ *Letters from and Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam*, by Suri Nagamma, pp. 5-7.

¹⁰ *My Recollections of Bhagavan Sri Ramana*, p. 52.

At once my very bones melted through undying love.
 I called aloud, roaring, roaring like the heaving sea,
 rose to my feet, collapsed again all in a daze,
 rolling over, wailing,
 raving like a madman, raging like a drunk,
 frightening those who saw, amazing those who heard,
 in a state of total derangement
 that even a rutting elephant would find unbearable.
 Then, when I could bear it no longer,
 he fashioned my limbs with a delightful sweetness,
 like honey fresh from the bough.
 Just as, with the flame lit by his beauteous smile,
 He brought low the three cities of his demon foes,¹¹
 He did that day, without exception,
 destroy in the great fire of His grace
 the humble [bodily] dwellings of us His devotees.
 To me He became as a *nelli* fruit¹² in the palm of the hand.
 Blessings upon You; I can find no words to express it!
 Is this justice? I cannot endure it, dog that I am.
 What You have done to me, I do not understand.
 For pity, this is death itself.
 This grace You have granted me, I cannot comprehend!
 I have drunk of it, yet still I am not sated.
 I have swallowed it down, yet I cannot tolerate it!
 Like waves upon the rich, cool Sea of Milk,

¹¹ A reference to a famous puranic incident in which Siva destroyed the three cities (the Tripura) of the *asuras* after a protracted war between the *devas* and the *asuras*, who are, respectively, the good and the demonic inhabitants of the spirit realms. In this war the *asuras'* cities were protected by a boon that stated that the cities could only be destroyed if they were all hit by a single arrow. When the *devas* appealed to Siva, he intervened on their behalf and destroyed the three cities with a single arrow. In a variation on this theme, Siva destroys the three cities with a single smile. This is the version that Manikkavachakar seems to prefer.

¹² 'As clear as the *nelli* in the palm of the hand' is a well-known proverb that means that something is clear and obvious. In this context it means that Manikkavachakar had an incontrovertible experience of Siva.

like the ocean when the moon is at the full,
 in a way that cannot be described,
 He filled my heart to overflowing,
 distilling and collecting nectar
 in my body's every pore.
 Within the body of this cur, taking up His abode,
 He caused ambrosia sweet to flow
 through every conduit of my sinful fleshly form,
 sending fulsome streams of wondrous nectar
 rushing up through the hollow of every bone.
 Taking my melting heart and making it one [with Him],
 He made for me a form saturated [in His grace].
 Like an elephant inspecting a field of bright sweet sugar cane,
 He came at last, even to me, and transformed me into pure being.
 His nature neither Mal nor Brahma knows,¹³
 yet with grace He transformed me into supreme ambrosia,
 making the pure honey of His compassion merge with me.¹⁴

Manikkavachakar's path to Siva was clearly through love and devotion. Bhagavan confirmed this when he echoed a well-known statement that the four saints (Jnanasambandhar, Appar, Sundaramurti and Manikkavachakar) had differing relationships with Siva: Jnanasambandhar saw himself as the son of Siva, Appar as his servant, Sundaramurti as his friend, and Manikkavachakar as his beloved.¹⁵

Bhagavan was once questioned about some of the more extreme manifestations of devotional ecstasy. In his interesting and informative replies he mentioned both his own and Manikkavachakar's experiences:

Devotee: Horrification, sobbing voice, joyful tears, etc., are mentioned in *Atma Vidya Vilasa* and other works. Are these found in *samadhi*, or before, or after?

¹³ A reference to Brahma and Vishnu's (Mal's) inability to find the beginning or end of Siva when he manifested as a column of light, the column that He later condensed into the form of Arunachala.

¹⁴ 'Tiruvandappahudi', lines 148-82.

¹⁵ *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, by Suri Nagamma, 26th January 1947.

Bhagavan: All these are symptoms of exceedingly subtle modes of mind [*vrittis*]. Without duality they cannot remain. *Samadhi* is perfect peace where these cannot find [a] place. After emerging from *samadhi*, the remembrance of the state gives rise to these symptoms. In *bhakti marga* [the path of devotion] these are the precursors to *samadhi*.

Question: Are they not so in the path of *jnana*?

Bhagavan: May be. There is no definiteness about it. It depends on the nature of the individual. Individuality entirely lost, these cannot find a place. Even the slightest trace of it being present, these symptoms become manifest.

Manikkavachakar and other saints have spoken of these symptoms. They say tears rush forth involuntarily and irrepressibly. Though aware of tears they are unable to repress them. I had the same experience when I was staying at Virupaksha Cave.¹⁶

Bhagavan seems to be saying in his first reply that such extreme symptoms are only possible if one still has a mind and a subtle sense of individuality, but in his final reply he makes it clear that symptoms such as spontaneous and uncontrollable crying can also break out in jnanis.

Though Bhagavan does not make it clear in his answer which specific verses of the Tiruvachakam he was alluding to when he made these remarks, he may have been thinking of the following lines in which Manikkavachakar describes the whole gamut of extreme emotional behaviour that God-intoxicated devotees indulge in:

As *maya*'s manifold delusion
surrounds them all about,
not succumbing to such errors,
not wavering from their fixed resolve,
they worship, melting
like wax before a flame;
they weep with body trembling;

¹⁶ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 372.

¹⁷ Two examples taken from Tamil idioms.

they dance, cry out, sing and praise.
Crocodile jaws and an ignorant woman¹⁷
hold on and don't let go, they say.
They [these devotees] hold on tightly
in love's true and unrelenting sway
like a spike that's driven
into fresh, green wood.
As love's flood grows higher,
they heave like the ocean's swell,
minds withering away, their bodies
quivering with delight.
When the world calls them 'Possessed!'
and makes a laughing-stock of them,
they remain unabashed, wearing
their countrymen's abusive words
like a jewelled ornament.
To hold onto and attain final liberation,
free of all sophistry, knowing naught,
is, for them, the miracle of the Supreme.
As a cow yearns for its calf,
they bellow and become agitated.
Not even in their dreams
do they think of any other God.
Nor, thinking it of no account,
do they spurn the majesty
of the unattainable supreme One,
who came in grace upon the earth
in the *jnana* Guru's form.
Like a shadow that knows
no separation [from its object],
they follow behind Your twin holy feet,
caring not in what direction [they go].
As bones soften and dissolve,
they melt in yearning, and melt again,
as love's river overflows its course.

Stammering, their hair on end,
 all senses focussed on the One,
 'My Lord!' they weeping cry.
 The lotus of their heart blossoms,
 as hands close like a flower bud.
 Teardrops spring forth,
 and ecstasy shows in their eyes,
 as in them daily flourishes,
 the love that never dies.
 Praise be to Him who, as a mother,
 nurtures such as these.¹⁸



¹⁸ 'Potritiruvahaval', lines 58-85.

All Commotion Eclipsed by Mighty Tsunami of Silence

KRISTAL FOREST

	<p><i>Sri Ramana Maharshi ka Upadesh Apni Sahaj Awastha Me Rabiye</i> (The Upadesha of Sri Ramana Maharshi: Remain in your Natural State); <i>Sampadak</i> (editor) David Godman; <i>Prakkathan</i> (Preface) Jyotishpithadishwar Evam Dwarkashardapithadishwar Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Swarupanand Saraswati Ji Maharaj; <i>Anuvadak</i> (translator) Ramakrishna Tuljaram Vyas; Pub. by Indica Books, Varanasi. email:Indicabooks@satyam.net.in Price: Rs. 175.</p>
	<p><i>Sri Ramanasramam Se Patra</i> (Hindi) This book is a translation by M/s. Chaya Tiwari and Geeta Bhatt from the English title <i>Letters from Sri Ramanasramam</i> originally written by Suri Nagamma . Now published in Hindi by Sri Shivalal Agarwal & Co., Book Publishers, Hospital Road, Agra. This book also available at Sri Ramanasramam Book Depot, Tiruvannamalai. Price: Rs. 80. pp.552.</p>
	<p><i>Tattwa Bodh</i> (Gujarati) This book is a translation from Sri Bhagavan's Tamil work <i>Upadesa Manjari</i>. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, LG Hospital Rd., Mani Nagar, Ahmedabad - 380 008. This title is also available at Sri Ramanasramam Book Depot, Tiruvannamalai. Price : Rs. 5. pp.64.</p>

These are my headlines for Jayanthi at Ramana Ashram this 125th year. Yes it is a bustling tourist energy here in Tiruvanmalai in December and January 2005. A Japanese tourist was overheard complaining in a local tea stall that the energy was not good for meditating. An American woman here on her first visit said that Ramana's Peace was hard to find in the old hall with the tourist's cell phones going off and sometimes getting answered too; huge numbers of bodies moving in and out of that well-made screen door; and families from every part of India filling the ashram.

So I found myself a protester to these occasional comments in the restaurants and coffee cafes. I tried various responses from a humorous

Kristal Forest is a teacher who lives in Kansas, USA.

“Ramana still lives here” to a more subtle suggestion that we just had to go deeper beneath the commotion. And I found that most of the dedicated meditators who chose the Old Hall as their principal retreat for sitting agreed. The surface noise on any normal day will include the screeching of air horns from trucks and buses on the main road, conversations occurring in many languages outside and around the hall, cell phone musicals, children crying, parts of roofs and buildings blowing in the wind, doors slamming, peacocks calling and the many songs and chants offered in the echoing temple next door. Yet, I found that usually after a brief settling with the pillows and wall as backrest, and a simple turning inwards all distractions were eclipsed by the mighty pull of the Silence in that narrow room with the black slated floor.

Another question I heard discussed was, from where does this Silence arise? From the mountain; from the couch where Bhagavan lived, slept and emanated his Grace for years; from the walls of the Old Hall where many people in Ramana's lifetime were guided to moksha and freedom from our own minds? These questions can afford a lot of coffee time conversations that go on and on and I heard many and drank too much coffee over them. Finally I can only offer my own small raindrop of experience to add to the accounts of many persons visiting the ashram.

It was the eve before Jayanthi 2004-05. All preparations seemed to be complete. The metal roof had gone up quickly next to the dining-room where thousands would be fed. A flap of metal from the roof near the Old Hall banged in the breeze that afternoon and evening, a bit like a gong announcing the beginning of an event. The evening had a feeling of expectancy and excitement.

I walked into the Hall as I have done every evening for two months around 6:00 pm. The evening chanting was getting ready to begin for the Thursday program. These morning and evening chanting sessions are a great gift to the meditator doing self-enquiry. These magnificent sounds seem to pour out of the walls themselves or from some sublime heavenly visitation as they cannot be seen from the meditation hall.

On this Thursday evening I came in with nothing much in my head and there was a seat empty on the wall facing north toward

Arunachala. Normally I sat facing east looking to Bhagavan's couch. I sat down, closed my eyes, noticed that I was facing the mountain and plunged into the current. There was a force coming from the mountain like a massive fire wind that burned away all thoughts. I hadn't even began concentrating when I was simply gone: a blazing light alone remained. Words begin to fail at these points in mystical experiences because thoughts are not there. I felt that I was seeing the mountain as it really was: a massive consuming fire and light. Being an experienced meditator, I made no efforts to understand or to watch the mind. I was consumed. Later it seemed a few thoughts flickered by like “Wow I should have faced north before”. Then the word or idea ‘submit’ which the Maharshi often used, arose with one last urge and again merging. I was very much in bliss and I had no idea of anything. The Presence was; then I saw him leaving the Hall. The tall long limbs, slender golden brown but radiating. He walked out the screen door and turned left toward the tank. At that moment a terrific chorus of peacock cries arose together. Now I was back in the mind and I thought, they have seen Him too and greeted Him. I was returning to body consciousness and tears were streaming down my face. I thought that Ramana has found an astral body and made his Birthday visit.

The next day the crowds packed all of the ashram's passageways and buildings, every nook and cranny. They closed the gates and doors on the temple. I had never seen so many people in the Ashram. Obviously, it was my first Jayanthi. I was horrified when I realized all these people were staying to eat. I thought that I wouldn't take up a place and looked to exit but there was no escaping as the crowd pressed on toward the dining area beneath Arunachala's slopes. So I filed peacefully to my banana leaf, the meal was elegantly and calmly cooked and served oh so efficiently. No one felt rushed but all were satisfied. We even got lovely desserts. I was very amazed and thought to myself, this ashram has excelled to a mastery level in serving delicious food to large numbers. I know it could not have happened in the west where chaos would have reigned after a few hundred. So this was a manifestation of Bhagavan's wish to feed all. It was again his amazing Grace. Each was satisfied according to his need, all who ate that day.

I hope that visitors who may doubt Ramana's continued presence and his form appearing from time to time if not always as this Mountain will find more patience and give it another try. Yes, I have heard Tiruvannamalai described as a spiritual circus and certainly there are monkeys, elephants, sadhu clowns and vendors of all kinds along with much garbage in the dust. As an American woman I would love to see the *pradakshina* road in front of the ashram free of screeching trucks and buses driving too fast, endangering lives. This and the garbage are the two things that I would remedy if I could as they do not honour the profound shakti of Presence here. I can hear my local friends protesting that this is *maya*, a dream world, so just leave it alone. As a westerner my response is, "Yes, All is the Self and if you can find the presence in the garbage and dead bodies then you are free, but the many pilgrims coming here from all over the world are looking for upliftment, inspiration and a glimpse of the sublime form." ▲

Letters to Friends

One

SWAMI SADHU OM

Many people who were interested in Bhagavan and Arunachala coresponded with Swami Sadhu Om. We present here a selction of his responses to various topics regarding sadhana.

Satsang

Bhagavan used to say that the very ground here at Arunachala is *Jnana Bhoomi*, a place of Knowledge.

Before Bhagavan appared on the scene, we all took *satsang* merely to mean the company of good people. But he made us understand that *satsang* is association with *Sat* (Pure Being). However, until we are able to ever abide in *Sat* as *Sat*, we can take the association with those who ever abide in *Sat* to be *Sat-sang*. Yet, since we take such people to be the body (we can't do otherwise while we take ourselves to be the body), we may feel when their body dies that we lose their

Swami Sadhu Om is best know for his Tamil devotional songs addressed to Sri Bhagavan and his writings of *atma-vichara*, in particular his *The Path of Sri Ramana, Part One*. He attained *samadhi* in 1985.

immediate company or association. But Arunachala is always here — and no-one can deny that this Hill is *Sat*. Therefore, *satsang* is always available at Arunachala and *pradakshina* is the best *satsang* of all.

When a needle is stroked by a magnet, it does not gain a new magnetic property since the needle's own true nature is magnetic — its magnetism is apparently hidden until it associates with a magnet. Similarly, we do not gain anything new from *Sat-sang*; because *satsang* merely reveals our true nature which is *Sat*; just as the magnetism of a needle is revealed by the repeated contact with the magnet, so are we helped to know our true nature by repeated *pradakshina* of the Hill or contact with *jnanis*.

Clue to know Self

Bhagavan has given us so many clues to know Self. 'Turn towards Self', is helpful when we sit for practise, though truly we cannot turn, since Self cannot be said to be in one place and not in other. When we are much overwhelmed by miseries, however, and we feel unable to turn to Self, we can try 'sifting' by thinking in this manner:

The miseries come to the body or mind to say, the person Sankaran, but am I this person? Did I feel 'I am Sankaran' in sleep? What then is the 'I feeling' which is mixed with Sankaran, mind, body etc.,? By thinking thus we may get the chance to focus our attention on the mere 'I'.

When we want to sift a diamond from the heap of pebbles, we attend to the heap and in doing so, our attention is caught by the diamond. Similarly, if we want to sift the 'I' from the mind, by scrutinizing the mind to find the 'I', our attention will be caught by the 'I' and we will find that there is no mind at all — this is the clue Sri Bhagavan gives in *Upadesa Undhiyar* verse 17.

Gita Rahasya

In the *Bhagavad Gita* Chapter 10, verse 37, Sri Krishna says: "...Among the Pandavas, I am Arjuna..." Most people understand by this that Krishna is praising Arjuna, but Bhagavan pointed out that it was not so. This was one of the many chances that Krishna gave to Arjuna to understand

the Truth, but Arjuna did not grasp it. What Arjuna should have felt on hearing these words is: "If He is Arjuna, I am not — then who am I?" and thus he should have erased his ego — the feeling 'I am Arjuna'.

Why is it that man is attracted to women and women is attracted to man?

When this question was put to me, I could at first only think of the answer, which Bhagavan would have given. "Why do you think that you are a man? Because you take the body to be yourself, you feel 'I am a man', or 'I am a woman'. Find out whether you are the body!" Really this is the right answer, but since the question was asked sincerely, I wanted to give something more as an answer. For a few days, I could think of no suitable answer because it was hard for me to imagine what that attraction was that they felt. However, after about 4 days, the answer came to me.

In every magnet, there are two opposite poles, north and south. Similarly, in every body there are the two opposite sexes male and female. Either we identify with the male body or the female body; if we feel I am a male, we are naturally attracted to female bodies, just as a north pole is attracted to a south pole! We learn in physics that if a magnetic bar is placed beneath a card and iron filings are spread evenly on card, we have a pattern which shows us where the magnetic attraction is strongest, where it is weakest, and where it is nil. Only in the very centre of the magnetic bar is it nil. If we move a little to either side of the centre, we feel the pull of either north or south. So also in the centre of every individual is a point where sex attraction is nil.

What is that centre? Where is that point that is common to both man and woman? It is I AM. Males feel I am a man; females feel I am a woman — in that 'I am' there is no sex. That's why Bhagavan says: come to the centre, come to the Heart, remain as I AM — then only you can overcome the sex attraction. So long as we move even a little to one side or the other side of the centre — so long we have the slightest identification 'I am a man' or 'I am a woman', we cannot overcome sex attraction. Moreover, if we forcibly try to reject the sex feeling (by attending to it instead of ignoring it), it would be like

cutting the magnet bar in the centre. When the magnetic is broken, two new bars, each with their own north and south are generated. The previous centre in the single bar then shifts to a new place, a centre, in the two new bars. What is more, now there are two new bars or lines of thought and the power of attraction is doubled. When we try to reject sex by maintaining forced celibacy, we actually strengthened it.

The correct way to conquer sex is ignoring the identification 'I am a man' or 'I am a woman' and attending instead to the mere I AM!

The secret of mantras

Once in Bhagavan's Presence a devotee asked what was the benefit of the mantra '*Namo Ramanaya*', and another devotee replied, '*mano marana*', (i.e., death of the mind - *marana* is the word used for death in *Ulladu Narapadu* v.2). Bhagavan laughed and approved the interpretation. We can also interpret it as: *mano ramana* (i.e. he who rejoices over the mind or he who gives happiness to the mind).

The secret of mantras is that particular sounds have particular influences over the mind. The mantra *Arunachala Siva* has the power to subside the mind because it was given for that purpose by Sri Bhagavan. My own experience is that the syllable 'NA' (in Ramana and Arunachala) kindles in us the same power which we use when we withdraw the mind from the second and third persons towards the first person; but no combination of sounds as great a power to subside the mind as the simple mantra 'I'. In the mantra 'I', we do not depend upon the power of the sound because that word (spelt in one's own mother tongue) denotes for everyone the feeling of one's own being; 'I' is the greatest and most powerful mantra even greater than Om (See *Day by Day with Bhagavan*. 28.6.46). This is one of the unique discoveries of Bhagavan.

In the past the platform heroes of philosophy have exaggerated the greatness of 'Om'. In *Arunachala Aksharamana Malai* v.13, Sri Bhagavan does not call Arunachala 'Om' but 'the meaning of Om' (*Omkarapprul*). What is important, and what is to be meditated upon, is not the word or sound Om, but That which is denoted by this word. ▲

Bach Flower Remedies

PATRICK ROBERTS

Thus we see that our conquest of disease will mainly depend on the following: Firstly, the realisation of the Divinity within our nature and our consequent power to overcome all that is wrong; secondly, the knowledge that the basic cause of disease is due to disharmony between the personality and the Soul; thirdly, our willingness and ability to discover the fault which is causing such a conflict; and fourthly, the removal of any such fault by developing the opposing virtue.¹

Dr Edward Bach (1886-1936) was a genius who discovered a new form of herbal medicine; a deeply spiritual man, he wrote that it was a 'God-sent gift', 'Divinely revealed'.² He was born near

¹ Edward Bach, *Heal Thyself*, 1931, p. 50. This book and the following titles except footnote 6 are all published by C.W.Daniel Co Ltd, 1 Church Path, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1JP, England.

² Edward Bach, *The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies*, 1952 edition, p. 3.

Birmingham, England of Welsh lineage, as his name suggests (*bach* means little in Welsh). While still a schoolboy he determined to become a doctor and so he studied at Birmingham University and then at University College Hospital, London, where he qualified. He worked as a bacteriologist, pathologist and homoeopath at UCH and the London Homoeopathic Hospital. He also had a consulting room in Harley Street and several private laboratories.

His own discovery of the close relationship between chronic disease and intestinal poisoning was confirmed by his reading in 1919 of *Organon* by Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homoeopathy. The Seven Bach Nosodes, which he had developed by 1920, are still used in homoeopathy today. They are oral vaccines prepared from intestinal bacteria; his initial aim to replace them with purer plant remedies is the origin of Bach flower therapy.

He gradually came to reject orthodox allopathic medicine, believing that it merely treats physical symptoms. 'The main reason for the failure of modern medical science is that it is dealing with results and not causes'. [3] He was convinced that the primary cause of disease, disturbing moods or negative mental states, is not removed by conventional medicine. Because disease in its origin is not material it cannot be cured by materialistic methods aimed at the body alone. 'Disease is in essence the result of conflict between Soul and Mind, and will never be eradicated except by spiritual and mental effort.' [4]

His basic underlying principle is 'Treat the patient, not the disease'. Because illness is the result of inner conflict and disharmony, a kind of consolidation of it, everyone has the power to heal himself. Negative thoughts poison the system. 'The real primary diseases of man are such defects as pride, cruelty, hate, self-love, ignorance, instability and greed'. [5] The flower remedies do not treat physical conditions *directly* yet they cure them. They work not by attacking the disease but by overwhelming the negative with the positive.

³ *Heal Thyself*, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.15.

Bach's system is revolutionary in that the diagnosis of the patient is based not on physical symptoms but by first observing the personality and temperament and then identifying the prevailing harmful feelings like fear, worry, depression, anger, discouragement. Usually several remedies are combined; Rescue Remedy is a good example of this, being a combination of Cherry Plum, Clematis, Impatiens, Rock Rose and Star of Bethlehem. Every household should keep a bottle of it to be used in emergencies such as accidents or shocking bad news.

The flowers chosen by Bach are from plants of a higher order; their subtle essence floods the patient with the positive energy required. The remedies are prepared either by the sun method or by boiling. The sun method is simple; the flowers are left floating in a glass bowl filled with pure water in direct sunlight for a few hours during which their power is transferred to the water by the action of the sun. A few drops of brandy are then added to the water to preserve it. The first nineteen remedies Bach found were all prepared in this way but the second nineteen were all boiled except for one.

There are thirty-eight remedies, all prepared from flowers which grow wild in England and Wales except for Cerato, Olive and Vine. By 1928 Bach had discovered the first three of them, Impatiens, Mimulus and Clematis. In May 1930 Bach left London, giving up his lucrative practice in his quest to find the others. After that date he charged no fees for his numerous consultations, trusting in Providence for his needs.

By autumn 1932 he had found the Twelve Healers which could treat the twelve major negative states of mind he identified. These are called type remedies because they relate to characteristic personality traits. They can be helping remedies as well but it is debatable whether the other twenty-six can also be used as type remedies, as Mechthild Scheffer claims. ⁶By 1934 he had found the next seven remedies, helpers to be used for chronic conditions. They are support remedies, often used in combination with a chosen remedy from the twelve healers.

⁶ *Bach Flower Therapy*, Thorsons, 1986 edition, p. 222.

The Twelve Healers are: Agrimony (hidden worry); Cerato (self-distrust); Centaury (weakness); Chicory (over-concern, self-pity); Clematis (indifference, dreaminess); Gentian (discouragement, despondency); Impatiens (impatience, tension); Mimulus (fear that has a known cause, nervousness, shyness); Rock Rose (terror, shock); Scleranthus (indecision, vacillation); Vervain (over-enthusiasm, stress); Water Violet (pride, aloofness).

The discovery of the first nineteen remedies was due to Bach's extraordinary hypersensitivity as well as hard work. The second nineteen remedies, meant more for *ad hoc* everyday use, had been revealed by the end of 1935; this had involved intense suffering for Bach. 'For some days before the discovery of each one he suffered himself from the state of mind for which that particular remedy was required, and suffered it to such an intensified degree that those with him marvelled that it was possible for a human being to suffer so and retain his sanity; and not only did he pass through terrible mental agonies, but certain states of mind were accompanied by a physical malady in its most severe form.'⁷ Bach had worn himself out by now, dying two months after his fiftieth birthday, having heroically accomplished his life's mission.

As well as the Twelve Healers, Seven Helpers and the second nineteen there is another way of considering the remedies. Bach himself also placed them under the following seven headings:

FEAR – Rock Rose, Mimulus, Cherry Plum, Aspen, Red Chestnut.

UNCERTAINTY – Cerato, Scleranthus, Gentian, Gorse, Hornbeam, Wild Oat.

INSUFFICIENT INTEREST IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES – Clematis, Honeysuckle, Wild Rose, Olive, White Chestnut, Mustard, Chestnut Bud.

LONELINESS – Water Violet, Impatiens, Heather.

OVER-SENSITIVITY TO INFLUENCES AND IDEAS – Agrimony, Centaury, Walnut, Holly.

⁷ Nora Weeks, *The Medical Discoveries of Edward Bach Physician*, 1940, p.114.

DESPONDENCY OR DESPAIR – Larch, Pine, Elm, Sweet Chestnut, Star of Bethlehem, Willow, Oak, Crab Apple.

OVER-CARE FOR THE WELFARE OF OTHERS – Chicory, Vervain, Vine, Beech, Rock Water.

It is truly inspiring to read the biography of Edward Bach by Nora Weeks which includes many brief case histories, as does Philip Chancellor's book,⁸ showing how effective the remedies are. Bach always cured the patient's physical complaint by treating the underlying psychological condition. However, the remedies need not be used to treat actual physical illness but simply to help one cope with the ups and downs of everyday life; indeed, used in this way they can prevent the arising of physical symptoms, let alone the slow growth of chronic conditions. They can be a great help to the bereaved.

There are two ways of taking the remedies. Add two drops of each remedy to a 30ml bottle filled with spring water from which four drops are taken directly on the tongue at least four times a day. Or put two drops of each chosen remedy in a cup of water and then sip it; this can be done once or perhaps twice a day. How long the remedies are taken for depends on the situation. They can be changed during the course of treatment if necessary. It goes without saying that, as with homoeopathy, the art is to choose the right remedies.

There can be no overdose, no unwanted side effects and no incompatibility with other treatments. Everyone can prescribe his or her own remedies as no special knowledge or skill is required. 'Inevitably there are some diseases which lie beyond the scope of this form of medicine and some conditions which are more suited to other methods of treatment but as we shall see the Bach Remedies can be usefully applied in almost all circumstances.'⁹

Anyone who is suffering from the inevitable problems of daily working life could benefit from some or all of the following remedies:

⁸ Philip M. Chancellor, *Illustrated Handbook of the Bach Flower Remedies*, 1990 edition.

⁹ Julian Barnard, *A Guide to the Bach Flower Remedies*, 1987 edition, p. 7.

Olive - nervous exhaustion; Larch - lack of confidence; Elm – overburdened by responsibility; Gentian – discouragement and doubt; Mimulus – fear of failure, of a job interview; Impatiens – tension, irritability; White Chestnut – sleeplessness; Chestnut Bud – repeating the same mistakes and not learning from them; Agrimony – hidden worry; Walnut – the stress of changing jobs; Centaury – allowing oneself to be used or dominated; Clematis – boredom; Vervain – overwork; Hornbeam – weary Monday morning feeling; Wild Oat – lack of career direction; Wild Rose – apathy; Pine -self-reproach; Holly & Impatiens – road rage (if the job involves a lot of driving).

Apart from the desire to get well, an essential part of the healing process is the work we must do upon ourselves, which requires the courage to face ourselves and acknowledge our faults. Suffering has a positive value in that it may be a corrective. A remedy in a 10ml bottle is inexpensive, lasts a long time and is preserved indefinitely. The remedies are pure, simple and natural. They work on babies, children, animals and plants, which proves that they are not a placebo effect. Let us thank Dr Bach for making available to all the wonderful healing power of Nature. ▲

Vivekachudamani of Sankaracharya Bhagavatpada

JOHN GRIMES

Advaita Vedanta is one of the most important and widely studied schools of thought in Hindu religion and the *Vivekachudamani* is not only one of the most important texts in the Advaita tradition but also the most popular philosophical work ascribed to the great Indian philosopher, Sankara. There are some modern scholars who are of the opinion that Sankara is not the author of this text and part of my introduction to this great work attempts to answer their objections.

The *Vivekachudamani* is in the form of a dialogue between a preceptor (*guru*) and a pupil (*sisya*) expounding the quintessence of Advaita in which the pupil humbly approaches the preceptor and, having served the teacher selflessly, implores to be rescued from worldly existence (*samsara*). The *guru* promises to teach the way to liberation (*moksa*) which culminates in the ecstatic experience of one's own Self.

Sankara (c. 650–700 ce, or Common Era) is considered to be a giant among giants, a living legend and probably the most venerated philosopher in India's long history. Advaita Vedanta hagiographies declare that a youthful Sankara composed the *Vivekachudamani* (*Crown Jewel of Discrimination*) in the *asrama* of his Guru, Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya, along the banks of the Narmada river, when he was barely a teenager.

Advaita Vedanta tradition avers that not every individual will possess the necessary qualifications (i.e., knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, the requisite philosophical training, and so on) to study the three foundational source books (*prasthanā traya*).¹ Thus teachers, out of compassion, composed what are known as independent treatises (*prakāraṇa grāṇtha*), which serve as introduction manuals. Such works contain four indispensable elements (*anubandha catuṣṭhaya*): the determination of the fitness of a student for the study of the treatise (*adhikāri*); the subject matter (*visaya*); the mutual relationship between the treatise and the subject matter (*sambandha*); and the object to be attained by the study (*prayojana*). The *Crown Jewel of Discrimination* is one such work whose clarity makes it extremely popular both among spiritual adepts and aspirants alike. It places maximum importance upon discrimination (*viveka*) in one's quest for liberation. Its main purport is to analyse the Self (*Atman*) and reveal that the individual self (*jīva*) is really the Supreme Self (*Atman*) or That (*Brahman*).

Because of the importance of the *Vivekachudamani* I decided to create an accessible translation of the entire text which includes copious Upanishadic cross-referencing to most of its 580 verses, extensive notes, a lengthy Introduction, a list of additional reading, an extensive bibliography, and an index to the verses. All those interested in Indian religion and philosophy, Hindu studies, or Sanskrit, may find this readable English translation of an Indian philosophical classic invaluable.

This new version contains an annotated English translation of the *Vivekachudamani* based upon the original Sanskrit text found in the Samata edition of the *Complete Works of Sri Sankaracharya*, volume III., *Upadesha rāchanāvali* pp. 3-111.

With nine English translations already in existence, why another one text.² Circumstances and contexts change. Assessments and

¹ *Upanishads, Bhagavadgita, Brahmasutras*.

² Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati, the Sankaracharya of Sringeri wrote a commentary in Sanskrit and has been translated into English. Of all the translations to date, it is clearly the most scholarly and faithful to the original style. Being a 'Sankaracharya' himself, perhaps this is to be expected.

interpretations are legion. Every language contains innumerable ambiguities. Strategic decisions vary and there are at least four such strategic decisions: (i) stylistic; (ii) pedagogical; (iii) interpretive; (iv) motivational. Translations present difficult questions. Some translators emphasize *content* while others emphasize *form*. Some employ primarily the historical approach and others the structuralist approach. Then there are the issues of gender and feminist perspectives.

The final word (*siddhanta*) of Advaita, both implicitly and explicitly, is that every individual is the Absolute (*ayam Atman brahma; tat tvam asi; aham brahmasmi*). Thus, to be faithful to this insight I have used inclusive language in my translation and made it reader friendly for both sexes. The truth of history is the truth of the historian.³ Time, place, context, tradition and audience all have their parts to play. Going beyond a mere professional interest, my desire is to present a text which speaks to those who read it today.

The Works of Sankara

During Sankara's relatively short life, more than four hundred works including commentaries and sub-commentaries (*bhasya* and *varttika*), independent works (*prakāraṇa*), and hymns, poetry, and praises of deities (*stotra*, *stava*, *stuti*) have been attributed to him. There is a school of academic research which considers that the majority of these works are apocryphal. It is possible that this list of works grew to such proportions because, in order to give a book authenticity, it has long been a common practice in India to attribute it to a famous author. Further, all the heads (*mathadīpati* or *jagadguru*) of the various Sankara monasteries have borne the title 'Shankaracharya' and thus any works, which they wrote could easily be mistaken for, and legitimately called, a work of Sankaracharya.

The question of determining the authenticity of which works are truly Sankara's is controversial and vexing. One of the early criteria

³ See Fiorenza's 'Remembering The Past in Creating the Future: Historical-Critical Scholarship and Feminist Biblical Interpretation', for a wonderful presentation of the pitfalls of invoking (what one thinks is) history, in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*, Chicago, Scholars Press, 1985.

considered by critical scholarship for determining Sankara's authorship of a given work was whether it was commented upon or quoted in one of the early commentaries.⁴ However, this criterion of subsequent commentaries or mention therein is as easily doubttable as to doubt Sankara himself. Certainty is still lacking.

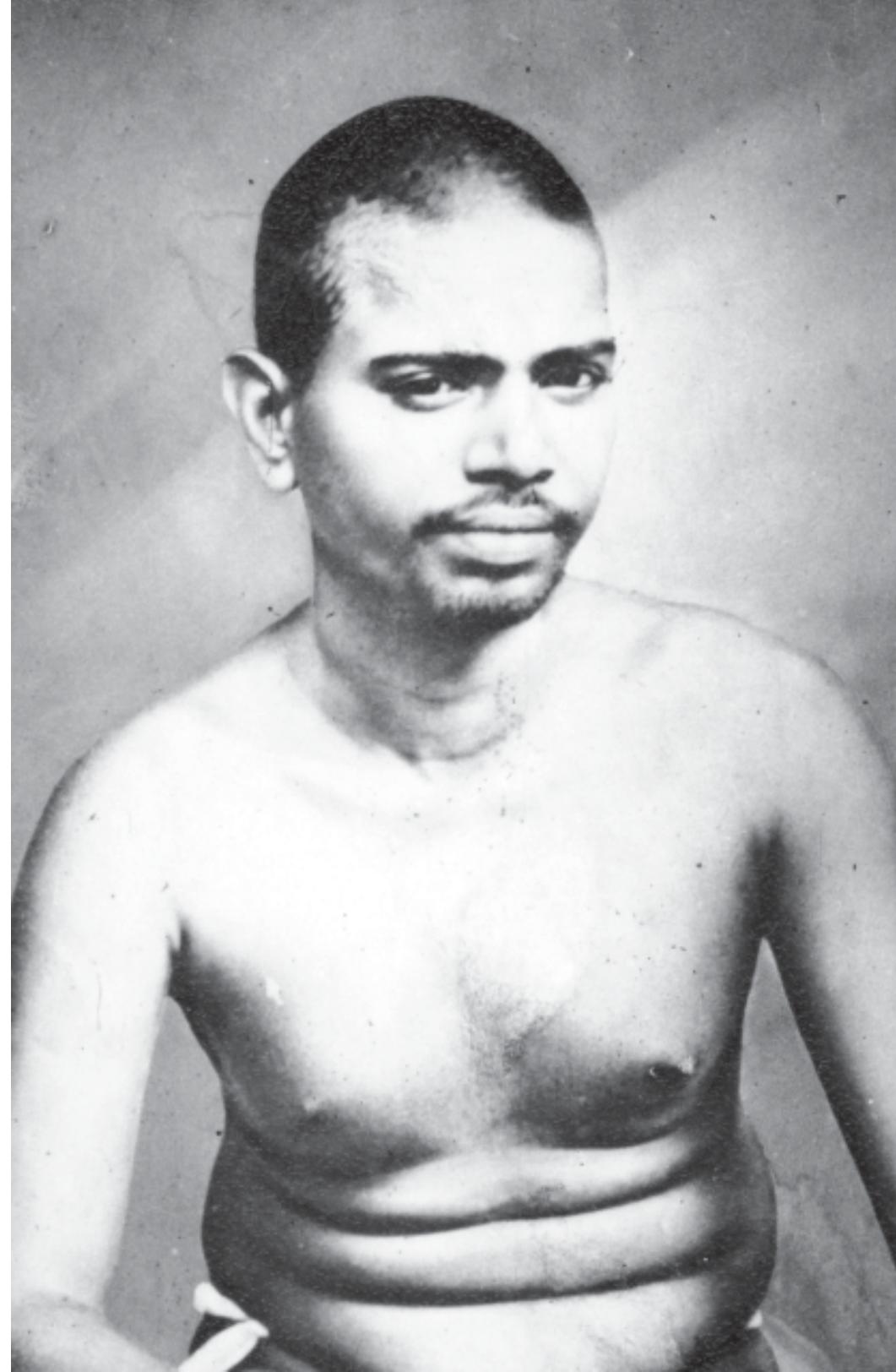
The German scholar Paul Hacker was one of the first modern scholars to formulate the problem of authorship clearly and to propose methods of investigation thereon. He proposed three main principles for determining the validity of a work: Check the colophon of a work and observe whether it is attributed merely to 'Sankaracharya' or, more authentically, to 'Bhagavat' or any of its versions such as 'Bhagavatpada' and 'Bhagavatpujyapada'; check for references in the works of his immediate disciples; and analyze the contents and/or special use of terminology in the work in question. However, it must be noted that Sankara's authorship cannot be *conclusively* solved by an analysis of a particular work's contents, table of categories, terminology, or colophon. Further, the plethora of ascribed poetical works neither contain strict philosophical terminology, logical argumentation, nor colophons. Thus, the debate rages on.

The question of determining the authenticity of the writings attributed to Sankara is a complicated issue. The fact that he allegedly lived such a short life coupled with the plethora of works of such diverse character attributed to him makes the issue all the more difficult. Which ones are genuine? Tradition wants to accept them all. Modern critics tend to be at the other extreme and be reluctant to accept more than three or four of the possibilities. However, I will take up this issue of authenticity with regard to whether or not Sankara was the author of the *Vivekachudamani*.

The Vivekachudamani

Within Indian philosophy there are a number of types of source books. The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* comprise the primary scriptures (*sruti*). The

⁴ Thus, because of Suresvara's commentaries on the *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad Bhasya*, *Taittiriya Upanisad Bhasya* and quotations from the *Upadesahasri* in the *Naiskarmyasiddhi*, they are considered authentic works of Sankara's.



Epics (*Itihasa*) including the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Puranas*, the Law Books (*Dharmasastra*), and the philosophical literature (*darshana*) comprise the secondary scriptures (*smṛti*). Among the philosophical literature, Vedanta recognizes the *prasthanatraya* (*Upanishads*, *Bhagavadgita*, and *Brahmasutras*) as foundational. However, to study these three foundational sourcebooks requires not only a qualified teacher, but also a profound knowledge of Sanskrit and a proficiency in grammar, logic, investigation, and Vedic lore.

Sankara, knowing that not all people would be qualified to study the foundational sourcebooks, compassionately wrote what are known as independent philosophical treatises (*prakarana grantha*), the elements of which were mentioned earlier in this article. Though the *Upadesasahasri* (A Thousand Teachings) is the only independent treatise that modern scholars have unequivocally ascribed to Sankara, tradition claims that among the more important independent works which Sankara wrote are *Atmabodha*, *Aparoksanubhuti*, *Pancikarana*, *Satasloki*, and *Sarva Vedantasara Sangraha*.

The *Vivekachudamani* is one such independent philosophical treatise and is perhaps the most popular of the *prakaranas* ascribed to Sankara. As its name indicates — *chudamani* or crown jewel of *viveka* or discrimination — discrimination is of paramount importance in one's quest for liberation. In a recent article,⁵ Francis Clooney describes the *Vivekachudamani* as a 'pedagogical masterpiece exclusively for male brahmins'. I take issue with this claim, as my commentary on verse. 2 states. This entire issue has been well documented in a recent book by Roger Marcaurelle.⁶

Professor D. Ingalls declares that there are four texts, which are indubitably Sankara's on the evidence of his direct disciples.⁷ He then

states that, 'if we then find a single occurrence of some distinctive theory on a problem of Vedanta philosophy (which does not appear in his *Brahmasutra-bhasya*), whatever the traditional ascription of this other work may be, we have *prima facie* evidence that it is not by Sankara'.⁸ Then, he concludes with absolute certainty that Sankara definitely did not write the *Vivekachudamani* on the basis of a reasoning, that the author of it has (i) made an absolute equation of the waking and dream states, and (ii) employed the theory of indescribability (*anirvacaniya*).

On the other hand, Hacker, who pointed out that Sankara uses the word 'anirvacaniya' in quite a different sense from that found in the *Vivekachudamani* still accepts the work as genuine based on the colophon.⁹

All this being given, a strong case can be made that the *Vivekachudamani* is a genuine work of Sankara's and that it differs in certain respects from his other works in that it addresses itself to a different audience and has a different emphasis and purpose. There is no rule that insists that a *prakarana* treatise should be consistent with a commentary. Indian philosophical works must conform to a prescribed form, setting forth, in an ordered manner, their leading concepts and doctrines. *Prakarana* compositions, on the other hand, are short manuals which confine themselves to some essential topics of a given theme.

In the case of the *Vivekachudamani*, it is a manual for spiritual disciplines (*sadhana*). Unlike many other texts ascribed to Sankara, it places an emphasis on spiritual practices, which purify the mind; it emphasises the horrors of the world; it makes numerous precise lists with very fine distinctions; it prolifically mentions 'wise men' and expands the scope as to who and what a wise man is. Obviously, one of the consequences of these latter references is to draw attention to,

⁵ 'To Be Heard and Done, But Never Quite Seen', Francis X. Clooney, *The Human Condition*, ed. Robert C. Neville, SUNY Press, 2001, pp. 73–99.

⁶ Roger Marcaurelle, *Freedom Through Inner Renunciation*, SUNY Press, 2000.

⁷ D. Ingalls, 'The Study of Samkaracarya', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol. XXXII (1952) p. 6. These are *Brahmasutrabhasya*, *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad Bhasya*, *Taittiriya Upanisad Bhasya* and *Upadesasahasri*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

⁹ It should be pointed out that Hacker mentions in two places in his other writings that he does not accept the *Vivekachudamani* as an authentic work of Sankara: see pp. 30 and 128 in Hacker's *Philology and Confrontation*.

and invoke, tradition, lineage, and authority. The *Vivekachudamani* advises the spiritual aspirant to revere and worship the teacher as a means of progressing in one's spiritual life. Thus, in all likelihood, the numerous references to 'wise men' not only serve to honour a tradition of sages and places Turth above any persona but also to encourage the aspirant to seek an adept.

The *Vivekachudamani* offers us an intellectually clear approach and analysis of the inner self and equates it with the *paramatma*, the supreme self. It elucidates that our self in substance, is Brahman appearing manifold in name and form as *jiva* (individual soul) and *jagat* (world). We are given an intimation of *atmajnana*. Though it is only textual knowledge, the purpose of the *Vivekachudamani* is to inspire us to pursue a *sadhana* with faith and determination to experience our true nature.

The *Vivekachudamani* had an important role in the life and teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He first read the text ca 1901 and discovered that the experiences described in the text were in accord with his own experience. He found it a valuable tool to teach others who came to him for instruction, in particular Gambhiram Seshayyar who was responsible for compiling the questions and answers in *Self-Enquiry*, the first work published in Bhagavan's name. It was because Gambhiram Seshayyar could hardly read Sanskrit that he requested Bhagavan to translate the text into Tamil. Bhagavan acceded to the request and began "to write a free and explanatory paraphrase of the Sanskrit text in Tamil prose".¹⁰ The first edition of the Tamil translation was published in 1908.

What is remarkable about Bhagavan's translation is that he had never formally studied Sanskrit. Because of his own abidance in the state described in *Vivekachudamani*, he easily understood the implied and hidden meanings in the text. His translation clarifies many subtle points in the text. And even in the English translation of the Tamil, the reader can sense the originality and precision of Bhagavan's rendering.



¹⁰ See Sri Bhagavan's Introduction to *Vivekachudamani*, translated by Sadhu Om and Michael James in *The Mountain Path* Oct. 1985.

BOOK EXCERPT

Vivekachudamani

JOHN GRIMES

We present here a brief excerpt from Vivekachudamani as translated and commented on by John Grimes, a noted academic authority on advaita vedanta. The book was originally printed by Ashgate Publishing Limited, England and is now available in India with Motilal Banarsidass. The softcover is priced at Rs 325 and the hardcover at Rs 495.

*san-nāpyasan-nāpy-ubhayātmikā no
bhinnāpyabhinnāpyubhayātmikā no
sāṅgāpyanaṅgāpyubhayātmikā no
mahādbhutā' nir-vacanīya-rūpā [111]*

It is neither real nor unreal nor both; it is neither undifferentiated, nor different, nor both; it neither has parts nor is partless nor both. It is supremely wonderful and of an inexpressible form.

This doctrine has given many the impression that Sankara claims the empirical world is unreal, illusory, non-existent. This impression is in need of a great deal of clarification. Sankara never denied that the physical

world of plurality appears real enough to those who live within it. Nor would Sankara deny that it makes sense to say that the waking state of consciousness is a public phenomenon and can be said to be the 'real world' in contrast to the 'private life' of the dreaming state. Further, Sankara would agree that within the physical world individuals may distinguish between what appears to be the case and what is actually the case.

Sankara accepts that a datum, any datum, is a datum or perceived object which is irreducible to the perceiving subject. In this sense, epistemologically, Advaita is a realistic school. Still, if there is a level of experience which transcends the subject-object dualism, then, at that level, duality is transcended or sublated. This in no way alters the fact that the subject and object are correlative terms and one should never think of retaining the subject while also reducing the object to the subject. One should never confuse Advaita with various types of subjective idealism. The Self is not a conglomeration of parts; of subjects and objects somehow reduced to one giant self.

Merely because one imagines that they are one small entity in a universe of infinite entities does not make it so. Sankara avers that there is the Self — not 'my self' and 'his self' and 'her self' and 'itself'. Because one is misled by the diversity of names and forms, minds and bodies, one imagines multiple selves. Simply because there are bodies present does not necessarily mean that one is a body. The body or mind may be like a room — it is there, but one need not live in it all the time. There is space within a jar and outside the jar. To identify with the space within the jar and then to declare that one is limited is a false view of what space is. Merely because one identifies does not make it so.

Sankara avers that anything which is experienced is real, at one level or another. Therefore, Sankara's epistemology is realistic and posits that every cognition points to an objective reference — whether correct or erroneous. The question becomes: exactly how real are the things that are experienced in the empirical world? Sankara replies that the things of the empirical world are real so long as the empirical order lasts. Thus, according to Sankara, the real is that which lasts, which suffers no contradictions, which is eternal and unoblatable. Things of the world may be said to be real until they suffer sublation. Thus, they

are called 'what is other than the real or the unreal' (*sadasat vilaksana*), illusory (*mithya*), or indescribable (*anirvacaniya*). Since they are cognized, they are not unreal (*asat*). Since they are sublated, they are not real (*sat*). By this criterion, *Brahman* alone is absolutely real, never being subject to contradiction. All else can be called 'real' only by courtesy. The distinction between one individual and another, the existence of a plurality of things, the attribution of attributes to the Absolute are all concessions to the Truth made from the relative point of view. However, to bring out the full implications of the term '*advaita*', it should be noted that such expressions as 'absolutely real' and 'from an absolute point of view' are merely contextual. They are used only by way of contrast with all that is not real. In no other sense can *Brahman/Atman* be called real. If one accepts the empirical world of plurality, then such expressions are meaningful. But to one who has realized the Truth, these expressions lose their significance.

See SvetUp 6.19, 'without parts' (*niskalam*); also 6.12.

See V. 67, 110-112, 125, 245, 406, 497, and 574 on *maya*.

*yaḥ paśyati svayaṁ sarvaṁ yaṁ na paśyati kiñcana
yaś cetayati buddhyādi na tad yaṁ cetayatyayam* [129]

That which, in itself, perceives everything but which nothing can perceive; that which illumines the mind and so on, but which itself cannot be illumined, That is the Self.

Even if the Self escapes objectification, it does not escape certainty. Nothing is more certain than the fact of one's own existence. It is self-evident, immediate and direct. A man may doubt many things; but he can never doubt his own being. This is because the very act of doubting would be an affirmation of one's very own existence. It cannot be proved since it is the basis of all proof and is established prior to all proofs. How can that by which all the means of valid knowledge are established itself be established by the means of valid knowledge?

Sankara was fond of stating that the Self, which is the content of everyone's understanding of the 'I' is the most immediately known entity possible. Preception of the Self is the most immediate, though it is not mediated by the senses. In fact, preception need not always be

sense-mediated. The distinguishing character of perception is its immediacy. This immediacy is a oneness of being. Thus, in this manner, knowing is, or becomes, identified with being. An individual knows the Self as the most certain perception of all because one is that Self. And not only is it that the Self of a sentient being is manifested immediately in one's indubitable experience, but even in the perception of an ordinary object the Self is revealed — for the Self is everything.

BrhUp 3.4.2, 'You cannot see the seer of seeing, you cannot hear the hearer of hearing, you cannot think the thinker of thinking, you cannot understand the understander of understanding. That is your Self which is in all things.' Also see MandUp 1.7; KenaUp 1.3, 1.7; MundUp 2.2.11; KaUp 2.5.15; SvetUp 6.14; BG 15.6.

pasyati = perceives; **svayam** = in itself; **sarvam** = all, everything; **cetayati buddhyadi** = illumines the mind.

*prakṛti-vikṛti-bhinnaḥ śuddhabodhasvabhāvaḥ
sad-asad-idam-aśeṣaṁ bhāsayan nir-viśeṣaḥ
vilasati paramātmā jāgrad-ādiṣvavasthasu
aham-aham-iti sāksāt sāksirūpena buddheḥ [137]*

The supreme Self, of the nature of pure knowledge, is different from primordial nature and its modifications. It is without qualities and illumines the real and the non-real, everything with form as well as the formless. It flashes through the waking and other states as their witness and is referred to as the 'I'.¹

The nature of the Self defies any description in terms of the categories known to thought. There is nothing similar to the Absolute, dissimilar to the Absolute, and there is no internal differentiation within the Absolute. See *Pancadasi*, 2.20-21. See also BSBh 0.1.14.

See KaUp 2.2.8, 'That person who is awake in those that sleep, shaping desire after desire, that, indeed, is the pure. That is the Absolute, that, indeed, is called the immortal. In it all the worlds rest and no one ever goes beyond it.' Also see KaivUp 1.18, 'In the three states of consciousness whatever appears as the object of enjoyment or the

enjoyer or the enjoyment, I am different from them, the witness, pure consciousness, the eternal Siva' (*saksi*) on witnesses. See V. 101, 127, 159, 212, 213, 217, 218, 223, 270, 295, 352, 370, 381, 384, 495, 506, 507, and 552 for references to witness (*saksi*).

prakṛti = primordial nature; **vikṛti** = transformations, modifications; **bhinnaḥ** = different from; **śuddhabodhasvabhāvaḥ** = of the nature of pure knowledge; **sad** = real; **asad** = non-real; **asesam** = everything, with form; **bhāsayan** = illuminates; **nirviśeṣaḥ** = formless, without qualities; **vilasati** = to shine, appear, to gleam, flash; **paramatma** = supreme Self; **jāgradadi** = waking state; **avastha** = states of existence; **aham** = 'I'; **saksat** = witness.

*jāgrat-svapna-susuptiṣu sphuṭatararṁ yo' sau samujjirmbhate
pratyag-rūpatayā sadāham-aham ityantah sphurannekadhā
nānākāra-vikāra-bhāgīna imān paśyann-aham-dhīmukhān
nityānanda-cidātmanā sphurati tam viddhi svam etam hr̥di [219]*

That which clearly manifests itself in the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states; which always inwardly shines in the same identical form giving an awareness of 'I'; which perceives the various modifications such as egoism, the intellect, and so on; which is self-effulgent; know that in your heart as your Self, the eternal blissful conscious Self.

See KaivUp 1.17, 'The world which shines in the states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep, knowing that it is the Absolute who I am.'

See KaUp 5.13, 'He is the eternal in the midst of the non-eternals, the principle of intelligence in all that are intelligent... the wise perceive him as existing within their own Self.'

jāgrat-svapna-susuptiṣu = waking, dreaming, deep sleep states; **sphuṭatararṁ** = very clearly; **samujjirmbhate** = shines independently; **pratyag-rūpataya** = the innermost; **sadā** = always; **aham** = 'I'; **sphuran** = self-effulgent; **ekadhā** = in the same form; **nānākāra-vikāra** = modifications of different kinds; **iman** = objects; **paśyan** = of perception; **nityānanda-cidātmana sphurati hr̥di** = shines in the heart as the self-effulgent, eternally blissful, conscious Self; **viddhi** = know.

¹ BrhUp 1.4.1, 'He first said, "I am". Therefore arose the name of "I".'

*bhrāntasya yad yad bhramataḥ pratītaṁ
brahmaiva tat tad rajataṁ hi śuktiḥ
idaṁtayā brahma sadaiva rūpyate
tvāropitaṁ brahmaṇi nāma-mātram* [238]

Whatever appears to a deluded person, under the hold of delusion, is the Absolute alone. Silver is nothing but mother-of-pearl. The Absolute is the reality of whatever is referred to as 'this'. Whatever is superimposed on the Absolute is merely a name.

The fundamental cause of suffering is ignorance or superimposition. Ignorance by itself is not enough. In ignorance, one doesn't see what is there. Then one superimposes what is not upon that which is. A human being superimposes upon the Self ideas like, 'I am deficient, inadequate right now'. Why? The evidence for this is compulsiveness/desiring/pursuit of pleasure and security. Why is the gain of security and pleasure so important? It is going to be the means of fulfillment, the means to escape want, inadequacy, incompleteness, bondage. The urge to be complete is what drives all actions.

Compare Sankara's concept of the Absolute which indicates not so much the absence of any character as the impossibility of attributing any conceptual category to Reality. Sankara's Being is not a being among beings. The Being that is the substance cannot be categorized. 'Yato vaco nivartante aprapya manasa saha' - 'whence words return along with the mind, not attaining it.' Sankara's Being is merest Being or Pure Being.

See ChanUp 6.1.4, 'By means of just one lump of clay one would perceive everything made of clay -- the transformation is a verbal handle, a name, while the reality is just clay.' Also see BrhUp 1.4.7. See V. 357 and 399 on names.

bhrantasya = deluded person; **bhramataḥ** = delusion; **brahmaiva** = the Absolute alone; **rajatam** = silver; **suktiḥ** = pearl oyster, mother of pearl; **idam** = this; **rupyate** = reality, form; **tvāropitam** = superimposed on; **brahmaṇi** = the Absolute; **nama** = name.

*ataḥ paraṁ brahma sad-advīṭiyam
viśuddha-vijñāna-ghanam nirañjanam
praśāntam-ādyanta-vihīnam akriyam
nirantarānanda-rasa-svarūpam* [239]

*nirasta-māyā-kṛta-sarva-bhedam
nityam dhruvam niṣkalam-aprameyam
arūpaṁ-avyaktam-anākhyam avyayam
jyotiḥ svayam kiñcid idam cakāsti* [240]

Therefore, this supreme Absolute is Real, non-dual,² utterly pure, the essence of knowledge, taintless, supremely peaceful, without beginning or end, actionless, of the nature of never-ending bliss, free from all differences due to illusion, eternal, unchanging, without parts, ineffable, formless, unmanifest, nameless, immutable, self-luminous.³ This something shines.

See MandUp 7, '... neither inside nor outside nor both; unseen (*adrstam*), can't be spoken of (*avyavaharyam*), ungraspable (*agrdhyam*), without distinguishable marks (*alaksanam*), unthinkable (*acintyam*), unnameable (*avyapadesyam*), peaceful (*santam*), non-dual (*advaitam*), auspicious (*sivam*).'

See SvetUp 6.19, 'without parts, without activity' (*niskalam niskriyam*); also 6.12. See also KaivUp 1.20-23 on the Absolute.

ataḥ = therefore; **paraṁ brahma** = supreme Absolute; **sat** = Real, Existence; **advīṭiyam** = non-dual, one without a second; **viśuddha** = utterly pure; **vijñāna-ghanam** = essence or homogenous mass of knowledge, wisdom; **nirañjanam** = stainless, taintless; **praśāntam** = supremely peaceful, highest peace; **ādyanta-vihīnam** = without beginning or end; **akriyam** = actionless; **nirantarānanda-rasa-svarūpam** = of the nature of never-ending bliss; **nirasta-maya-kṛta-sarva-bhedam** = that from which all differences due to illusion have

² See ChanUp 6.2.1 (*ekam evadvīṭiyam*); BrhUp 1.4.17 (*eka eva*); AitUp 1.1.1.

³ See US 1.11.11; MundUp 2.2.10-11. Also see V. 100, 153, 191, 213, 221, 508, and 536 on self-luminous.

been cast off; **nityam**=eternal; **dhruvam** = unchanging; **niskalam** = without parts, complete; **aprimeyam** = ineffable, beyond the faculty of reasoning, immeasurable; **arupam** = formless; **avyaktam** = unmanifest, subtle; **anakhyaam** = nameless; **avyayam** = immutable; **vyotih svayam** = self-effulgent, self-luminous; **kincit** = something; **idam** = this; **cakasti** = shines.

*buddhau guhāyām sad-asad-vilakṣaṇam
brahmāsti satyaṁ param-advitīyam
tad-ātmanā yo' atra vased guhāyām
punar na tasyāṅga-guhā-praveśaḥ* [267]

In the cave of the intellect, there is the true, the supreme non-dual Absolute which is other than the real or the unreal. For one who lives in this cave as that Self, there is no further return to the cave of the body.

See KaUp 2.1.12, 'The person of the size of a thumb resides in the middle of the body' (*angustha mdtrab puruso madhya dtmani tisthati*); KaUp 1.3.13, 'Lodged in the secret place' (*loke guham pravistau*). See verse 134 for the cave and V. 191, 219, and 257 for the heart.

buddhau guhayam = cave of the intellect; **sad-asad-vilaksanam** = other than the real or the unreal; **brahmasti satyam param-advitiam** = there is the true, supreme non-dual Absolute; **punar na tasyariga-guha-pravesah** = there is no return again to the cave of the body.

*samādhinānena samasta-vāsanā
granther vināśo' khila-karma-nāśaḥ
antar-bahiḥ sarvata eva sarvadā
svarūpa-visphūrtir ayatnataḥ syāt* [364]

By this one-pointed absorption of the intellect in That, the knots of all residual impressions and the results of all actions are destroyed. One's own nature, within and without, everywhere and always, will, without effort, spontaneously arise.

See MundUp 2.2.9, 'The knot of the heart is cut' (*bhidiate hrdaya granthis*); KaUp 2.3.15, 'When all the knots that here fetter the heart

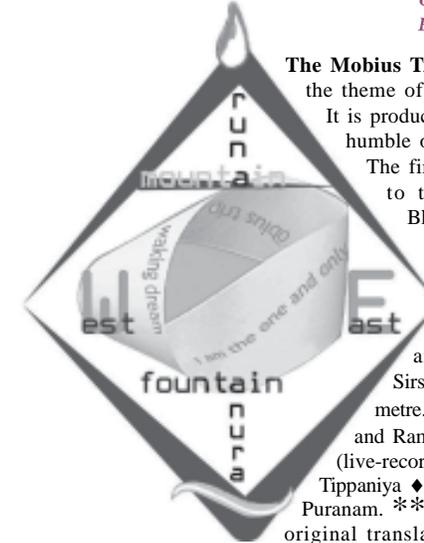
are cut asunder then a moral becomes immortal'; ChanUp 7.26.2, 'There is release from all the knots of the heart'. See V. 354, 424, and 559 on knots of the heart. See V. 342, 343, 354, 355, 358, 361, 363-67, 376, 408-11, and 474 on *samddhi*.

samadhinanena = by this one-pointed absorption of the intellect in That; **samasta-vasana granther** = the knots of all residual impressions; **vinasa** = totally destroyed; **akhila-karma-nasah** = destruction of the results of all actions; **antar-bahih** = within and without, inside and outside; **sarvata eva sarvada** = everywhere and always; **svarupa-visphurtir ayatnataḥ syat** = one's own nature will spontaneously arise without effort. ▲

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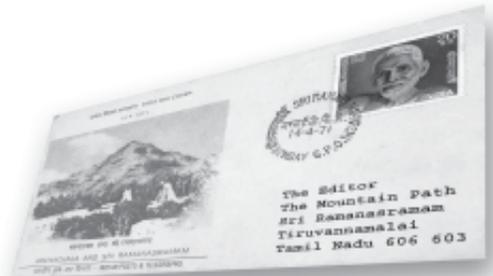
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Pure Advaita and Neo-Advaita**

In response to an article in the Deepam 2004 issue entitled “Advaita and Neo-Advaita” — Editor

Here, now What is the difference between the fundamentalist preacher who states: ‘There is only one way to the Father.’ and the non-dualist sadhaka who says: ‘Pure Advaita is superior to neo-advaita.’? Who dares deride the feeble stirrings of the novice heart seeking truth? Do we ridicule toddlers or encourage them? Does not an ant make progress too? Where is the one who “will not quench the burning wick or crush the bruised reed”? (Matthew 12:20) “Suppose a man has faith,” Arjuna says, “but does not struggle hard enough? His mind wanders away from the practice of yoga and he fails to reach perfection. What will become of him then?” The question summons the answer: “No, my son. That man is not lost, either in this world or the next. No one who seeks Brahman ever comes to an evil end.” (*Bhagavad Gita* ch. 6 Prabhavananda/Isherwood translation) The intellect, the final mask of the ego, loves to hide the one it protects through the illusion of logic. Exposed, it evaporates. That which remains is our way, our goal, our ground..... the Self! Advaita embraces rather than rejects. Advaita both changes to meet the exigencies of the times and remains

forever the same non-dual truth. There is no neo-Advaita, only new ways of telling the old truth. Advaita unites the World, God and Beyond into what-is, the Reality. Emptiness is form and form, emptiness. (The Heart Sutra) Let it be what it is. Whether we stumble along or break through now, the ground of our Being awaits, as it always is. Let the children play. Let the seeker search. The progress of each is compared to that one alone. “Where can I go? I am always here,” says Ramana. — *Submitted for your consideration, by uno-mon.*

The very first words of Grace of Ramana

People of Ramana-world (seekers, devotees, etc. of Ramana) knows that the first written spiritual instruction i.e. clarification of doubts, come from the very first seekers or written on their request. The well known is Sivaprakasam Pillai, to mention only one of them. Some years ago, I discovered that the very very first instruction of our Beloved, a masterpiece was given to his brother Nagaswamy on 29th August 1896, a few hours before his departure from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai. This came to me not like a revelation, I mean not like apperception, but a result of my intellectual investigation. It stung me then that I should share this discovery with Ramana-world, somehow, I didn't. Now after much thought, I feel ready to do so:

What he wrote is full of *jnana* indeed, but the signature is unique in the history of great masters. He drew a few lines with a gap between the lines.

This is for me the very first written word of Grace, a masterpiece of all the instructions He has given to the seekers who approached him.

He said: “The interval separating two consecutive thoughts represents the ‘I, pure state’. The ‘I pure state’ is Reality, the Existence, Awareness and Absolute Bliss.”

The important words for me are ‘thoughts’ and the gap between them, ‘I pure state’.

For many years, I thought about these words of Grace. To experience the ‘I pure state’ the seeker of ‘I pure state’ has to be in ‘the interval separating two consecutive thoughts’. But in this gap, there is place

only for the 'I pure state'. So, the seeker of 'I pure state' becomes the 'I pure state' when he is in 'the interval separating two consecutive thoughts'. If the seeker begins or try to make sure that he is indeed in 'the interval separating two consecutive thoughts', he is no more the 'I pure state' but only a seeker of 'I pure state' — because he is thinking.

For many years, I thought the seeker becomes the 'I pure state' but only today I understood that the seeker of 'I pure state' IS the 'I pure state' in 'the interval separating two consecutive thoughts'. Our beloved said, "SELF, is simply to BE; not to be this or that, just to BE". What an enormous error! The seeker disappears like the shadow disappearing in the light, leaving only the 'I pure state'.

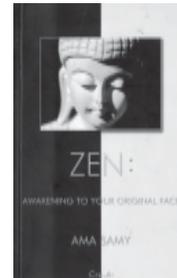
It took 17 years to understand these real words of Grace of our Beloved!

These words of Grace remind me also a photo: an attendant standing on left (a line, a thought) and Visvanatha Swami standing on the right (another line, another thought) and our Beloved standing in the middle, between them (the 'I pure state'), returning from his walk.

— Richard Selvame



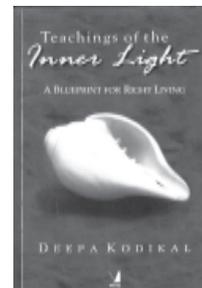
BOOK REVIEWS



ZEN: AWAKENING TO YOUR ORIGINAL FACE, by AMA Samy. Cre-A: Flat No. 3, New No. 19, South Avenue, Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai 600 041 E-mail: crea@vsnl.com, 2005, pp. 236, Rs 325.

Father AMA Samy offers an accessible introduction to the world of Zen and a comprehensive overview of the basics of Zen practice and the essentials of awakening through sitting meditation. AMA Samy delineates his own personal journey that led him from Catholic priesthood in the Jesuit order to mentoring by Sri Ramana Maharshi, Swami Gnanananda, Swami Abhishektananda, the Upanishads, and finally to Kamkura, Japan, where he trained under Yamada Ko-un Roshi. The author was sanctioned as a qualified Zen instructor by this noted teacher and established Bodhi Zendo in Kodaikanal in 1996 where aspiring Zen students come to train under his guidance and expertise. *Zen: Awakening to Your original Face* is a companion volume to his earlier *Zen Heart*, *Zen Mind* and offers valuable insights particularly for Zen enthusiasts but also for spiritual seeker of other traditions.

— Michael Highburger



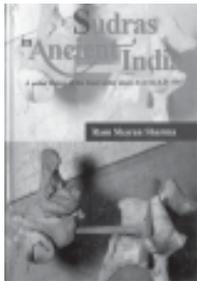
TEACHINGS OF THE INNER LIGHT: A BLUEPRINT FOR RIGHT LIVING by Deepa Kodikal 2004. Viva Books Private Limited, 426/3 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi. pp. 278, Rs 250.

We are seeing in India a new phenomenon in spirituality. The genius of the Santana Dharma is that it can find new vibrant modes of expression in this modern world and still retain its truth and potency.

The Mountain Path recently reviewed the spiritual search and experience of the present author in her *A Journey within the Self*. She lived an apparently normal middle class life in Mumbai until her inner mystic and spiritual experiences unfolded and overflowed into the public domain.

In this second volume, she concentrates on the principles of this Inner Light and how we each can experience it. As readers, we generally can discern in books what is genuine and what is simply waffle. Though this book does not say anything particularly new, there is a freshness and vitality, which is inspiring. It speaks to a modern audience and neither condescends nor gushes with unrealistic declarations. There is a sense of sobriety and urgency in the writing. There is also a sense of authority that comes from legitimate experience and an inclusiveness of spirit, which is the hallmark of intelligence and compassion. The emphasis is on experience rather than theory. There is a you-can-do-it style about the book but that does not detract from the juicy, intelligent thrust of this natural mystic's blueprint. For those who are tired of trite statements and want to enter into a commitment to learn and understand themselves and the journey through life I would recommend this inspiring book.

— Peter Pichelmann



SUDRAS IN ANCIENT INDIA: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE LOWER ORDER DOWN TO CIRCA A.D. 600 by Ram Sharan Sharma. 2002 Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi. pp. 384, Rs. 495.

Originally published in 1958 and now in its fourth edition, *Sudras in Ancient India* is a established scholarly study in Indian social history by a respected voice in the field, Professor R.S. Sharma (b.1920). It examines ancient Indian social structure and explores Sudra's social and economic relations with the members of the higher *varnas*. Based mainly on literary texts (as opposed to archaeological investigation) the method of study is rooted in traditional social anthropology and draws especially on Weber and Hopkins but wisely consults later indigenous experts on the subject such as Ketkar, Dutt and Ghurye. As a point of departure the author asks the following questions: If Sudras were meant for serving the three higher orders, can they be categorized as slaves? Was ancient Indian society a slave society? Did the reforming religious sects bring about any fundamental change in the position of the lower orders or did they try to contain and stabilize the changes that had occurred on account of other factors? An instructive study for the student of sociology and social history of India.

— Dr. T. R. Radhakrishnan

RELIGION AS KNOWLEDGE: THE HINDU CONCEPT by Janaki Abhisheki. Akshaya Prakashan, 208 M.G. House , 2 Community Centre, Wazirpur Industrial Area, Delhi – 110 052; pp.462; Rs.300.

This is its second revised edition of a book which has received commendation in the columns of *The Times of India*, *The Indian Express* and *The Hindu* as well as by Swami Ranganathananda

There is something solid about the book. Not just in the number of pages but in the attempt to make it a comprehensive source book of the varied aspects of Hinduism, arguably the most irrepressible and elusive of world faiths. The contents, thus, leave almost nothing outside its scope. Starting off with a historical background, its author presents the basic features of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Gita*, *Smriti* texts, *Purana*, the two epics, the six philosophical systems, the significance of symbols. Besides, unlike most writings of the nature, Mrs Janaki also provides insightful accounts of *sastras* (*Dharma*, *Kama*, and *Artha sastra*-s), the Chaturvarna system, the doctrine of karma. The survey is rounded off by looking at some problems in Indology, and the Hindu contribution to world knowledge.

The canvas is daunting, the complexity unnerving. One expects platitudes, common places. But the author acquires some focusing through the lens of Religion as knowledge. But knowledge is a “multivocal catchpenny word” notoriously intractable to perceptual or conceptual clarity. Its sheer range is impressive. Do we mean a simple analysis of the world in which we live and to which we try to relate in myriad ways? Are reason and intellect, in this case, the basic modes of perception? Then we get what Gregory Bateson called (in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*) patterns of “limited thresholds” of knowing. As the author rightly says: “It is only an open, discriminating, balanced, impartial objective, understanding, fearless and unbiased approach that can lead to the acquiring of any worthwhile knowledge.” However, can anyone hope to qualify so that they achieve “worthwhile knowledge?” Above all, when it is noted that, knowledge which tells us “the spirit is one and all” is supreme — the receptacle of knowledge is full and overflowing.

I am not, when I say this, metaphorical or even rhetorical. The plurality of perceptive knowledge is down the line of Hinduism. There are varied ways of knowing and corresponding ways of responding. And along with plurality, there is also fluidity. For instance, *dharma* has no categorically imperative meaning. It has varied contexts which determine

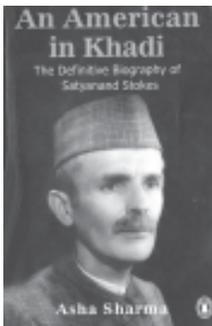
the significance and behavioral patterns. It is, by and large, this plurality and flexibility which make for resilience in interpretation.

But a certain amount of equivocation cannot be, in the very nature of things, avoided. For instance, in the interesting chapters on *Smriti* (pp. 99-115) the author says: "Hindu thinkers used both reasoning as well as traditional knowledge. While reasoning consists of observation, inference and comparison, traditional knowledge acts as reference material and a useful guideline." And adds, traditional knowledge "is not different from what is found in the world today." The equations implicit here are not very clear.

I also felt that a chapter on *Tantra* (not random reflections) would have been of inestimable value. This most fascinating system attracting the attention of New Age enthusiasts as well as serious explorers needs to be put in the perspectives that dominate this study. But, alas, the author is no more.

This is certainly an invaluable source-book which avoids needlessly technical trivialities. Elegantly brought out, with select bibliography, chronology and index, it is a reader-friendly study which acquires significance in the context of polemical, often aberrant, studies of Hinduism.

— M Sivaramkrishna



AN AMERICAN IN KHADI: THE DEFINITIVE BIOGRAPHY OF SATYANAND STOKES by Asha Sharma. 1999 Penguin Books India. pp. 426, Rs. 395.

A biography of Satyanand Stokes carefully researched by his granddaughter. He was born in Philadelphia in 1893. He seems to have been a fierce idealist, passionately devoted to whatever cause claimed his attention at the time. He came to India as a missionary in 1904 and so disapproved of the life lived by the missionaries that he started his own order of mendicant Christian sadhus called 'The Brotherhood of the Imitation of Jesus.' After a few years he gave that up when he came to believe that it was encouraging the wrong emphasis in spirituality and he got married to a Christian girl. He bought a large land holding in Kotgarh in the hills of Himachal Pradesh and settled down to the life of a local farmer.

Naturally he became a freedom fighter and was associated with Mahatma Gandhi, Pundit Nehru etc. He even spent six months in jail

but resented being incarcerated in the European section as he would rather be with his Indian friends. Later he gave up politics and devoted himself to improving the apple strains in his hills which he loved. He also opened a school for his six children and eventually the whole locality.

He studied Hindu scriptures and decided to convert to Hinduism in order, one suspects, that his children should be more integrated into the local community. His entire family converted but it caused some of them much distress. This is when Samuel Stokes changed his name to Satyanand.

He wrote innumerable tracts, pamphlets and books and went on devoting himself to different causes until his death in 1946.

This biography is very well written and gives a picture of an interesting man who lived in interesting times. — K. Anand

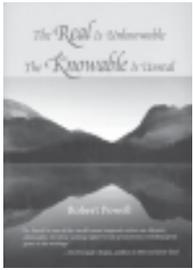
DICTIONARY OF POSITIVE THOUGHTS; POSITIVE LESSONS FROM LIFE; SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM LIFE: All three by Rakesh K. Mittal. 1997 Sterling Books, L-10 Greenpark Extn., New Delhi 110016. Pp.142, Rs.75.

The author is a distinguished officer of the Indian Administrative Service and a technocrat turned administrator. With thorough understanding of philosophical concepts, the author views both his personal and professional experiences in a very unbiased and scientific manner.

Dictionary of Positive Thoughts is strung together on the theme: "You are nothing more than what you think you are". *Positive Lessons from Life* has 50 chapters; each deals with an important aspect of life which together form the fabric of life common to one and all. But a change of perspective makes all the difference. The author positively notes that the mind which is the experiencer is capable of gaining expansion, irrespective of the outcomes of interactions. In all the 50 chapters in *Spiritual Lessons From Life*, the spiritual dimensions of life which go to make an integrated personality are dealt with. There are reflections on the deep lessons learnt from the events of day to day life. The author says that with time the nature of these lessons became more spiritual and all the conflicts of life ceased to upset the mind.

All three books are interrelated and make interesting reading and serve as guides for those who seek a meaning to life. — N.S. Krishnan

THE REAL IS UNKNOWABLE, THE KNOWABLE IS UNREAL by Robert Powell 2005, pp.147, US\$12.95.



CHRISTIAN ZEN: THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST [The Secret Sayings of Jesus As Related in the Gospel of Thomas], compiled with commentaries by Robert Powell, 2003 pp. 111, US\$12.95. North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California 94712. Website: www.northatlanticbooks.com

The author is well known in advaitic circles for his incisive writings on the tradition. There is a clarity in the presentation which makes for agreeable reading. The writer's skill leads the reader to believe at times that he or she actually understands the thrust of the argument. Mr. Powell has demonstrated that a discussion of the advaitic truths need not be turgid or obscure. His ideas are full of light.

The first of the two books under review is a collection of essays some of which have been published in *The Mountain Path*, as well as a compilation of letters Mr. Powell wrote to those seeking his guidance. They are sane and compassionate as well as modest which is no mean quality in these days when so many proclaim their so-called enlightenment to a grateful world. I would recommend this book to those who wish to gain some clarity as to what is the advaitic tradition and how it applies to our common everyday lives.

The second title under review is unfortunately disappointing. I don't know why, perhaps Mr. Powell's heart was not in it. The explanations seem forced, artificial and tired. The book is supposedly a comparison between advaita and the gospel of St Thomas. It fails to convince.

— Peter Pichelmann

THE PRASTHANATRAYA: An Introduction by Swami Harshananda. Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore 2001.

The Vedanta system is built primarily on the Prasthan Traya —the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavadgita*, and the *Brahmasutras*. Details about these texts are given in this book.

The author gives the essence of the *Bhagavadgita*. The *Gita* presents us with three original doctrines: i) the doctrine of *nishkama* karma-yoga (the yoga of desireless action); ii) the doctrine of integral yoga (as a comprehensive mode of *sadhana*); iii) the doctrine of *avatara*. The *Gita*, known for its universal approach, is one of the most translated religious

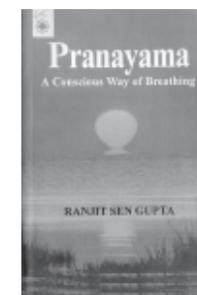
classics of the world. The Hindu tradition compares *Mahabharata* to a lamp and *Gita* to its light.

The *Upanishads* are based on the intuitive mystical experiences beyond the intellect. All Indian schools of thought are influenced by them. *Upanishads* are accorded the status of the highest authority. They are revelation, *sruti*, and form one homogeneous unit. According to Bal Gangadhar Tilak the *Upanishads* belong to the period 2500 BC - 2000 BC. Only 10 to 15 are considered to be older *Upanishads*. They are the basic sources of ancient Hindu philosophy. The *Upanishads* centre around two words, the *atma* and the *brahman*. They stress the idea of *moksha* as the primary goal of life.

The *Brahma Sutras* are cast in the sutra model. They are also called the *Vedanta Sutras*, *Sariraka Sutras*, *Uttara Mimamsa Sutras* and the *Bhikshu Sutras*. These *sutras* systematise the teachings of the *Upanishads* into a coherent philosophy. There are 12 principal commentators for the *Brahma Sutra-s*.

The author concludes that the Vedanta system based chiefly on the *Brahma Sutra-s* has influenced all the important aspects of Hindu religion and culture, including the modern Hindu movements. The book is valuable as an introduction to Vedanta and source book for the learners.

— T.N. Pranatharthi Haran



PRANAYAMA: A Conscious Way of Breathing by Ranjit Sen Gupta 2000 New Age Books A-44 Naraina Phase-I, New Delhi 110028 Email: nab@vsnl.in Website: www.newagebooksindia.com pp.140 Rs195.

Pranayama is an important limb of raja yoga. It is a system of breath control which can revitalise and purify the physical and mental body. The book under review clearly and simply introduces us to the basic breathing practices of this delicate discipline. Though Pranayama in its more advanced stages does require guidance, the author of this well thought out self-help book is very careful to reveal to the reader only that knowledge which cannot harm any right thinking person.

The logical step by step presentation of the physiological background,

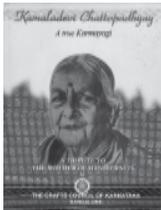
THE MOUNTAIN PATH

the basic preparations required, the intelligent discussion of what prana means and how to tap it is commendable.

The author and publisher have obviously made considerable efforts with the quality of the paper, the layout, charts and style of the book. This first-rate book is meant to be a practical companion for everyday reference and use.

— Amrit Ray

Books Received



A TRUE KARMAYOGI by Amaladevi Chattopadhyay, 2003 The Crafts Council of Karnataka, 37, Sribhooma1,17th Cross Malleswaram, Bangalore - 560 055 (India) tholasiprintsindia@vsnl.net, pp. 111, Rs 250.

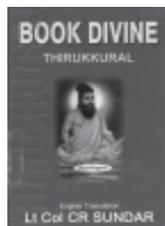


ADVAITIC EXPERIENCE by K.N. Subramanian. Guru Publications, 2003, "Peace Villa", No. 356, Mahakavi Bharathi Nagar, Vyasarpadi, Chennai—600 039, tel: 25511882, pp. 78, Rs. 150.



MIND OVERCOMING ITS CANKERS: AN IN DEPTH STUDY OF MENTAL EFFLUENTS IN THE BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE by Ven. Acharya Buddharakkhita. Buddhist Publication Society, 2004, P.O. Box 61, 54, Sangharaja Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka, pp. 230.

THE WISDOM OF SRI DATTATREYA [AS EXPOUNDED IN TRIPURA RAHASYAM], by K.N. Subramanian. Sura Books (Pvt) Ltd. Chennai 2003, pp.120, Rs.95.00.



BOOK DIVINE: THIRUKKURAL by Saint Thiruvalluvar, English Translation Lt Col Cr Sundar. Om Vignesh Publishers, 2001 Plot no. 43, 24th Cross Street, Padmavathy Nagar, Selaiyur, Chennai - 600073, pp.292, Rs. 110.

RAMANA KIDS CORNER



Dear Children of Bhagavan,
Happy Deepam! This time at Ramana Kids Corner, you will meet a child-like devotee of Bhagavan and a puzzle to guess the correct festival. I like to hear from you. Send me your letters to ramanakids@yahoo.com

Swami Shantananda Puri

Have any of you met Swami Shantananda? Yes, yes, he is the Swamiji, with the child-like, gleeful smile on his face, bursting with joy. He is often seen at Sri Ramanashramam. Swamiji is an ardent devotee of our Bhagavan Ramana. Talking to Swamiji, is like talking to an innocent child, simple and open. On Bhagavan's Jayanthi day in 2004 (Jan. 8th 2004), a family with two children approached Swami Shantananda for his blessings. The Swamiji was residing at Sri Ramanashramam in the cottage assigned to him. He was at that point of time in *mouna* i.e. in silence. The family requested Swamiji to give instructions to the kids on how to meditate. Since the Swamiji was in *mouna*, he wrote down a very beautiful, simple message. This letter is a treasure, it is from God's child to all children between 0 -99 years. This heart-felt message was written very spontaneously, and all present felt the blessings.



Swami Shantananda Puri

Dear Children,

OM. In life as you grow, you have to meet problems. Even as children, problems in school, problems in house, health problems. So in all these problems, there is one helper sitting inside our heart. He is very kind, all powerful. He will help if you call him. How to call? There is a code word — daily sit down for 15 minutes and shut your eyes. By imagination, imagine that you are seeing in the right side of the body next to the HEART which is on the left. Then you just think continuously “Who Am I?” “Who Am I?”. The one who is sitting inside the Heart is called GOD. Also, called the SELF. But His pet-name is “I”. If you do it daily, your intelligence, memory, beauty, creative capacity — all will grow — and one day you will become great. Do not repeat “Who Am I” but go on feeling — focus your attention. It looks difficult. Do it for 6 months — so easy! It will help you at all times.

Blessings of Bhagawan. HARI OM.

What is HARI OM? Short form for “Hurry Home” — Wish you a nice journey! (pointing to the heart, meaning the inward journey)
 — Swami Shantananda
 Jan. 8th, 2004 (Jayanthi Day)

Activity

Arunachala Paati: What a loving message from Swamiji! Is meditation really that simple? Can children really meditate? There are so many scholarly books written about meditation. How can it be that simple? Our Bhagavan’s message is exactly that, very simple. He taught us these golden code words — *Who Am I!* It is for everybody. In fact, adults can meditate only if they become child-like—innocent, pure and simple.

So why waste time anymore? Let us begin to do self enquiry every day. Don’t worry if you are doing it right or not. Bhagavan will guide us every moment. All we have to do is to obey our Guru, our Father and our Friend.

Please write to us anything you want to say or ask about meditation — how you meditate, when, and why you meditate etc. Send your letters to ramanakids@yahoo.com



Pournami



Pongal



Kartigai
Deepam



Ramana
Jayanthi



Deepavalli

Holi



Which festival is being celebrated?

This issue celebrates a festival at Tiruvannamalai. Which one could it be? Use these clues to eliminate the different festivals. You will be left with the festival that is going to be celebrated grandly on December 13th, 2005.

Clues:

1. This is not a monthly celebration;
2. It is not a celebration of the birthday of a saint;
3. This is a festival of lights;
4. This festival is about the column of light.

Did you guess right? Yes it is the Deepam festival. Hundreds of thousands of devotees gather to celebrate Kartikai Deepam, where a huge flame is lit on the peak of the Arunachala hill, symbolizing Siva’s appearance as a huge column of light. Devotees circumambulate the Hill, and many climb towards the peak. At Sri Ramanashramam around 6pm, devotees gather outside the Samadhi Hall, and begin to recite the *Aksharamanamalai*, facing their beloved Arunachala. All are blessed as they witness the lighting of the Deepam. On Deepam day, may we all remember the light within each of us! Nammo Ramana.

Dear Children of Bhagavan,

Happy Deepam! This time at Ramana Kids Corner, you will meet a child-like devotee of Bhagavan and a puzzle to guess the correct festival. I would like to hear from you. ▲



109th Anniversary Celebration of Sri Bhagavan's Advent

109 years ago, a day before *Gokulashtami*, Bhagavan reached Ariyanallur in Tirukoillur. That was a Sunday. The following day, on *Ashtami* (eighth lunar day), he had a hearty meal at the house of Muthukrishna Bhagavathar across from Kilur temple. On the morning of Navami, Tuesday, he stepped into Arunachala Kshetram and from that day on never left Arunachala's Holy Feet. That was the 1st of September, 1896, a day that marked the beginning of an epoch and paved the royal spiritual path of Self-enquiry for seekers the world over.

Pali Tirtham

Last year Sri Ramanasramam did structural improvements and increased the tank's holding capacity. We removed sludge and other contaminants which helps to keep water reserves clean when the tank fills during the monsoon each October. Last year we saw unexpected heavy rains in the month of May which filled the reservoir to capacity some five months early. Unfortunately this year there has a paucity of rain and the tank dried up completely and this summer Pali Tirtham was completely cleaned.

Apollo Hospital Health Camp

Apollo Hospital Chennai held a free medical camp at Sri Ramanasramam June 25th-26th where devotees and residents were invited to undergo extensive medical testing free of charge. The door was open to all and some 400 local residents took advantage of the service. Evaluations are underway and follow-ups with specialists will be undertaken this fall.

At the Kendras...

Sixth Annual School Competitions

The month of July saw the Sixth Annual School Competitions involving young competitors from 70 schools in and around Chennai. Organized by Ramana Kendra, Chennai, competitions centred on themes of Bhagavan's life and teaching. Music competitions entailed teams of ten members each competing for prizes by singing verses of Sri Bhagavan with musical accompaniment.

Tirupati Ramana Kendra

In the afterglow of the 125th Jayanthi Year Rahta Yatra, a new Ramana Kendra is being established in Tirupati presided over by Prof. M. Srimannarayana Murti. Regular satsang is held each Monday evening and publications projects such as the *Arunachala Mahatmyam* in Telugu are underway.

Arunachala Ramana Ganapathi Ashram

Ramana Maharshi Heritage and Vasista Ganapathi Muni Memorial Trust are establishing "Arunachala Ramana Ganapathi Ashram" in Kaluvarai Village (Bobbili Mandalam, Vijayanagaram Dist. A.P.) At the cost of one crore the complex is to include Mandirs for Bhagavan & Ganapathi besides a meditation hall, a library, a Vedic school and guest houses to accommodate devotees.

Salem Ramana Kendra

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Centre, Salem, has recently established a library and meditation hall for free use by Bhagavan Ramana devotees at 17, Vasagasalai Street, Ponnammappettai, Salem. ▲