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RAMANA ASHTOTTARAM

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EDITORIAL

Ramana Ashtottaram

40. ओम् विराजदचलाकृतये नमः

Om virājadacalākṛtaye namaḥ

Prostration to the One whose form is radiant stillness.

It is said that during the Virupaksha days, not only devotees and visitors, but even monkeys and other animals were transfixed in blissful stillness by the presence of Bhagavan. Arunachala is 'frozen fire' and people saw in Bhagavan a human embodiment of this blend of brightness and stillness.

If there is one attribute which epitomizes Bhagavan's activity it is this radiant stillness. Bhagavan is the ever-present light of Selfknowledge which banishes ignorance.

41. ओम् उद्दीप्तनयनाय नमः Om uddīptanayanāya namaḥ

Prostration to he of lustrous eyes.

The Grace spontaneously rising like a fountain from his heart streamed out through those lustrous eyes and blessed all who recognized and surrendered to this divine power. Bhagavan initiated mature aspirants with direct eye-to-eye contact, silence or words.

The phrase also means: Distinguished leader on the well-lit spiritual path, one who leads others to the ever-present glow of the Heart.

The Question of Identity

The great mystery which lies at the heart of our lives is the question of identity. Who we are or rather who we think we are is the basis of our self-regard and behaviour. We are forever on the look out for signs that confirm the way we see ourselves. We look into other people's faces for hints as to what they think of us. The inert mirror is both our trusty friend and obdurate enemy. We read books on philosophy and psychology, history and novels, newspapers and magazines not just to satisfy our curiosity but also to tell us where we stand in the world. The possibilities are endless. We but rarely ask ourselves who we actually are. We would rather trust some external source of authority than our own inner voice.

Bhagavan has described this myopic behaviour in a comment on the inordinate fascination with book knowledge (*sastra-vasana*). He said it is similar to a person who, when standing in front of a mirror, shaves the face in the mirror rather than his own face. At any time a human being can imagine himself from many diverse points of view. Although widely varying, all are legitimate and fairly normal unless they become obsessive. At every moment we are faced with an infinite number of possibilities but due to our conditioning we repeatedly identify with just a few, to such an extent that we assume these masks to be indelible. The passage of time can be irrelevant when we reflect on our personae: a small recent triumph can call to mind a long gone sense of well-being, just as some school yard humiliation of decades gone by can infect us with the never forgotten bitterness of regret. There are moments in our lives which define who we are.

There comes a point when the burden of these notions suffocates us and we wish to throw them off, like uncomfortable ghosts. We long to be free of the past and the image of ourselves that we wear so constantly. We want to be free though we are not sure what that entails.¹

From the metaphysical or universal point of view the personal aspect is necessarily inadequate. The individual lies in the realm of manifestation and we understand that every moment of our existence is transient; manifestation is in constant flux. Nothing remains the same from one moment to the next and who we think we are is subject to countless pressures that bend and twist us with the winds of circumstance.

From childhood we learn to recognise faces and to judge if they are benign or threatening. We assume certain facial expressions to communicate our thoughts or emotions whether consciously or, more often, involuntarily. With time and habit we become frozen with narrow gestures. It is related about Abraham Lincoln when he was president of the United States that he received in his office one of the secretaries of his cabinet. After the meeting was completed and the official left, Lincoln remarked to his personal secretary that he did not like the face of that man. The secretary replied that he could not help what his faced looked like. Lincoln replied that every person after the age of forty is responsible for his own face.

The key to understanding is to know who we are. Our reason for living is to become conscious both of our physical and mental states and transcend these conditions and be absorbed into 'That'. According to Bhagavan's teachings we are advised to either question our identity by the query 'Who Am I?' or surrender to the Master.

There is a fundamental distinction between what is called the 'Self' and the self, the transcendental and permanent principle and the transient and limited series of modifications we call the ego or *ahamkara*. The latter assumes the garb of the transcendental principle but with one difference; the ego is dependent upon form for its existence. It cannot exist without identifying itself with a static form in time and space. In advaitic terminology it is called *chit-jada-granthi*, the knot of insentience. The aim of our quest is not to attain something but to disabuse ourselves of the false assumption that we are someone or something in particular. We are not separate (*advaita*) from that transcendental principle. The dilemma we encounter is that the instant we think we must attain or possess that principle we have made it an object and are consequantly separate from it.²

Laughter is perhaps one of the greatest aids in treating life as it comes without undue solemnity. Bhagavan was known for his sense of humour and for his sharp wit. There is a tendency for spiritual seekers to take themselves far too seriously. For example, it was once related to me that a new arrival from Europe asked a resident swami what to do next as she had realized the Self after three days in the ashram and was at a loss as to the next step, assuming that there was one. This is cause for a wry smile but if we examine ourselves closely we all delude ourselves each day with our petty achievements. Detachment and discrimination are required at each moment of our lives if we are not to be sucked in by the fancies of the mind.

¹ The ego is like one's shadow thrown on the ground. If one attempts to bury it, it will be foolish. The Self is only one. If limited it is the ego. If unlimited it is Infinite and is the Reality. Talk 146.

² Since, however the physical body cannot subsist (with life) apart from Consciousness, bodily awareness has to be sustained by pure Consciousness. The former, by its nature, is limited to and can never be co-extensive with the latter which is infinite and eternal. Body-consciousness is merely a monad-like, miniature reflection of the pure Consciousness with which the Sage has realised his identity. *Maharshi's Gospel*, Book Two, Ch. IV., The Heart is the Self, p.56. Sri Ramanasramam, 2000.

A sudden ray of light through the miasma of confused thoughts can result in an abrupt crispness of mind which creates a burst of happiness. This surge is short-lived as the old entrenched vasanas will reassert themselves, sometimes with unexpected virulence. For someone who naively thought they had achieved the ultimate goal it is a grave experience; the golden dream of themselves at the centre of the universe is shattered. It is a question of small steps, not giant leaps.

People can deceive themselves by claiming that they are, to use the now much abused jargon, 'Self-realized' and therefore are not identified with their body. This statement is all well and good, however, there is a caveat. If they are not the body then with this assumption comes the realization that it is irrelevant whether their body is hungry, cold or ill. The moment we think to preserve or give undue importance to our physical body it reveals an attachment which is contradicted by our declaration that we are not the body. A picture can be conjured up of the dedicated but undiscerning seeker dressed in the regulation robes, surrounded by a selection of 'necessary' paraphernalia whilst performing various complicated exercises and all the while declaiming 'I am not the body'. For the great majority of us, every minute reaction of the body is registered and analysed to see if it brings pleasure or pain.

The one we can definitely say was not the body was Ramana Maharishi. As a mere boy when he first came to Tiruvannamalai, he found himself in the Pathala Lingam shrine where he remained in a state of samadhi neither eating nor sleeping nor aware of the insects that were feeding off his body. If it were not for Seshadri Swami who fed him and ministered to his body he would never have physically survived. *That* is what it means to truly feel that one is not the body.

We are all vulnerable whatever the appearance to the contrary. We walk the proverbial razor's edge each moment of our lives. A single incident can irretrievably affect us. There is an element of danger each time we travel on a public road and if the stars are unkind we face the prospect of annihilation in a flash. As long as we fear and guard against accidents or death, who can say they are the unaffected Self, the Supreme Siva? We are convinced the body corresponds to us and ask, how can we be free of its limitations?

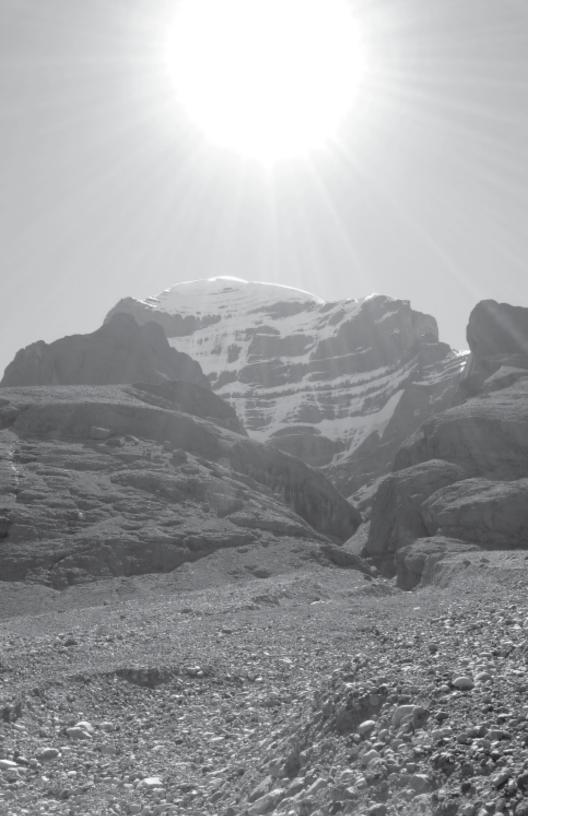
If Bhagavan is to be believed, however thick the wall of self regard and opinions, we are all at heart unsullied by thought and emotion. The question is: can we stop filling ourselves with ideas and activities which distract us from this unconditional clarity?

Who am I? Who is it who is asking the question? If we listen carefully there is no answer. There is a silence, and if we are patient, a sense of wholeness which is indescribable. It needs for nothing, it asks for nothing. This silence disregards completely our complusions and the need to justify ourselves. If we have the courage to enter its embrace our conflicts dissolve.

There are many reported cases of seekers who entered Bhagavan's presence with minds buzzing with important questions which demanded to be answered. For many of them they did not even open their mouths to ask. They were enveloped by the mysterious power of Bhagavan's silence and all their questions dropped away like so much irrelevant noise. It is no different today when we enter the silence of the Old Hall or if elsewhere, attuned to Bhagavan's charisma. That mysterious presence awaits us without preconception or judgement.

Our identity is like an image in a mirror: it reflects but of itself it cannot see. Who is it who sees? Who am I? Again and again we come to this point. The operative word is 'be' for we can neither go forward nor go back. We seem stuck. This is an important clue. By 'being' we actively enter into that silent gap and slip free of our sense of separation and identity. The invitation is always available. The first step is ours to take. What it is and who we are, are questions we cannot answer. By themselves, all our reading and all the explanations we have imbibed are insufficient. They are but a preparation for this experience.

When we are open and are touched by Bhagavan's impersonal gaze, which recognises no difference, our questions are not so much resolved as beside the point. Once accepted, our identity is no longer a predicament; we realize it is immaterial and enter the stream of low-key, spacious awareness we associate with Bhagavan.



Vision of Siva at Kailash

SHIVANI

Visiting holy places and sacred shrines is the ancient Indian religious tradition called *Yatra* or pilgrimage. Yatra is a journey in quest of God. In India, from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas, from the Indus to the Brahmaputra, there are innumerable holy spots, each one dedicated to God with a temple or shrine. Most of these places date from prehistoric times and the legends associated with their origin form the subject matter of hymns and sacred literature. Interlaced in mythology, each place with its distinct spiritual aura, has a pulsating effect and great magnetic attraction. A *kund* (holy pond), a hill or a mountain are characteristic landmarks of these sorts of places which are called *teerthsthaan* (place of pilgrimage). Going on Yatra therefore holds special significance; it means travelling to a holy place, bathing in its holy waters, performing the ritual of circumambulation and offering prayers. While some of us believe that undertaking a Yatra is

This excerpt is from an upcoming book. A segment of this article appeared in THE MAHARSHI Vol. 16, No. 4. (Photos: Alaxander Shuvalov).

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a *praayschit* (penance) for past karmas, we add more value to it when the journey is made more difficult, such as by travelling on foot. The struggles enrich the pilgrim and encourage surrender to God. The longing of a heart tired of worldliness and the cycle of pain and pleasure reinforces the craving for final freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Thinking of the Lord and chanting His Holy Name aim at bringing one closer to Divinity. In such a lofty state of mind, one may be blessed with divine encounters or visitations in dreams.

Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra

In Hindu religious tradition, the Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra is considered the greatest pilgrimage, for Mount Kailash is the abode of Lord Siva. Every devout Indian who has listened to the Puranas longs to have darshan of the Holy Mountain and Celestial Lake at least once in his or her lifetime. My mother's grandfather who was a habitual traveller, visited many sacred shrines in India. But his greatest pilgrimage was the one he undertook in the 1880s to Holy Kailash. He set out by foot in the company of friends and their faithful staff. Their Yatra of one and a half years commenced in Andhra Pradesh in the winter months and continued via Puri, Bodh Gaya, Prayag (Allahabad) and then to Kaashi (Varanasi), Agra, Delhi, Haridwar, Rishikesh and Badrinath. By resting and camping at each of these places, they could have darshan of their *ishtadevatas* (personal deities) at such sacred shrines as that of Lord Jagannath and Lord Vishwanath, take holy baths in the Sangam and other special places along the Ganga. At each stopover they rested and replenished their supplies.

Kailash-Manasarovar is situated in the trans-Himalayan belt in the remote region of Tibet (now in Chinese territory). From the Indian border it is a long journey and involves difficult terrain at high altitude and inclement weather, thus at times, posing a serious risk to life. During their Yatra, there were many setbacks such as impossible weather, ill-health and landslides and they were thus compelled to break their journey on several occasions. Despite the obstacles they all finally arrived at their destination, had the darshan of Kailash, bathed in Manasarovar and returned safely. My great grandfather was a changed man; upon his return he began living differently: he began to live within.



Bhagavan Sri Ramana says: "To go to Kailash and return is a new birth, for there the body idea drops off." It was a great joy for me to listen to my mother relating my ancestor's experiences at Kailash-Manasarovar with its tales redolent of mythology. It was thus early on that the desire was born in me to go to the place my great grandfather called 'heaven on earth'. Kailash-Manasarovar drew me like a magnet. If Lord Mahadeva gives His sanction, He also leads the way.

Manasarovar

Lying between two majestic mountains, Kailash and Gurla Mandhata, Lake Manas presents a picture of utmost serenity. Spell-bindingly calm and peaceful — this is Manasarovar at first sight. It is as if Manasarovar is not part of this earth but belongs to *parlok* (heaven). Seeing and feeling its tranquil waters, its arresting beauty by day and by night, the mind automatically becomes concentrated. Lake Manas is spread over 325 sq. kilometres; it has a circumference of 85 kilometres, a depth measuring 300 feet and is almost circular in shape. Lying at an altitude of 14,950

feet above sea level, it is regarded as the highest body of fresh water in the world. In the early morning when the reflection of Holy Kailash falls on the serene waters of Manas it is indeed a rare and blessed sight. As the veil of the morning mist lifts, like a mirror, Manas reflects the image of Holy Kailash, so suggestive of ultimate union of all with the Divine. With your eyes scanning Kailashpati your heart becomes as pure as the snow on the Holy Mount and as your gaze lingers on the tranquil waters of Manasarovar your mind becomes as clear as crystal. In that instant, mind and heart are rid of impurities.

The three days we spent at Manasarovar was like eternity. Time stood still. To understand divinity one must experience the powerful and penetrating silence and stillness of this place. A pilgrim is overcome by a constant awareness of the impermanence of all creation. In such an ambience there is no need for words. It was a potent time to look afresh at life, to look within and seek to improve oneself. Yatris would take leisurely walks along the shore in the warmth of the afternoon sun; others would sit gazing transfixed on the Mystical Mount dominating the horizon, reciting the thousand and eight names of Lord Siva. And when the golden sun was setting, it rendered a spectacular magic show upon this Dev Bhumi — the heart and the eyes could not be contained. They overflowed — one with joy and the other with tears! As dusk fell, the chilly air and howling wind sent us scurrying indoors.

One Night

One night during my stay at Manasarovar, I was in the grip of a strange fear. It appeared to have started with a simple upset stomach and worked itself up to uncontrollable proportions that left me weakened in both body and mind. By nightfall I felt tired, miserable and worried. Noticing my restless condition, my fellow pilgrims reassured me there was nothing to worry about. They said it was probably the effect of the rarefied atmosphere, climatic changes and the desolate landscape. Nevertheless my fear remained.

After dinner my roommates fell asleep while I sat there on my bed wide awake, searching for security. Accommodation at the guesthouse was on a share-basis, with five pilgrims to a room. It was a small room

and the window and door were tightly shut at night to keep out the biting cold. This left little ventilation and in this stuffy room I began to feel claustrophobic. Gazing out through the window in the blackness of night, I could see snowflakes gently falling. Now and then I heard the ominous howling of wild dogs. Several times I got up and went out for fresh air, but it was too cold to stay there for long. So I just as quickly returned indoors only to be tortured by this inexplicable fear. It was a mystery to me why all this was happening. It was the fear of doom and my mind went berserk imagining all sorts of tragic scenarios. The loud breathing and snoring of my roommates put me somewhat at ease. I wished that someone would wake up and keep me company. I was tempted to wake up everyone to rescue me from this terrible fear, but in the end better judgment prevailed, for I felt none could save me from my predicament

I checked the time every so often. Each minute seemed endless. While the hours passed slowly I was drowned in agonizing fear. All was silent and still. It was midnight and still there was a long night to pass; I could bear it no longer. In desperation, at last, I turned to the Lord and cried out from the bottom of my heart: "Save me Siva, from this agonizing fear. Help me, please!" I pleaded and clung to Him like one drowning. Like someone possessed, I ran my fingers feverishly over the *japa mala*, chanting His holy name. I prayed with an intensity quite unknown to me.

Sometime between three and four o'clock I must have fallen asleep. At long last a reprieve from my mental anguish. Then I had a dream. I dreamt I was at Sri Ramanasramam, inside the New Hall where the stone couch and statue of Bhagavan are seen. The place was brightly lit and there was an air of much activity, people coming and going. A gentle hand ushered me to a spot where I saw Sri Bhagavan seated on the ground, leaning against one of the tall stone pillars. As we see in some of his photographs, Bhagavan Ramana was looking far away, beyond the beyond. I was so overwhelmed being in his presence that to prostrate before him never crossed my mind.

"Look intently at the Guru," a voice whispered. "You will see him blessing you!" An aura of immense peace suffused the hall while



Bhagavan sat in rock-like silence. I looked on spellbound. Oh, what radiance! What a store-house of compassion! I stood there in awe and rapture. Then a thought crossed my mind: 'Bhagavan is looking far, far away. Will he not glance my way and bless me with his gracious look?' Reading my mind and in his infinite kindness, Bhagavan slowly turned his gaze and rested it on me. Our eyes met. A luminous light appeared, like an orb as cool as the moon. I was engulfed in that splendorous light, in Divine peace and ecstasy. I had no sense of body or mind and experienced unspeakable peace, immersed as I was in that Supreme Light. Even upon waking, that brilliant light and that

supreme peace lingered in my consciousness. The feeling of fear that issued from my subconscious was instantly extinguished by this divine dream. I found eternal shelter in this divine vision. With his intrinsic greatness, his gentle look and benign smile, Bhagavan blessed me. To this day, this blessed vision remains ever fresh.

In the morning my fellow pilgrims were surprised to see a remarkable transformation in me. "Tell us what medication you took to have acquired an air of such well-being overnight," they asked. I smiled, but said nothing. People say one should not disclose the experience of divine dreams immediately because its effect will diminish.

With Bhagavan's blessing I was able to reach Mount Kailash in the best of health and spirits and obtain the blessings of Siva.

Conclusion

The blessings and darshan of Sri Kailashpati during parikrama are extraordinary experiences. Mount Kailash's many faces are thrilling and auspicious and convey special meaning. The south face is described as sapphire; the east as crystal; the west as ruby; and the north as gold. Darshan of the southern aspect is snow-cushioned, gentle and inviting; the north face gives Vishwa Sivalinga darshan radiating divine power; the western aspect is all misty, wisps floating in the sky and showering *amrita*. Mystically, the south face is the first view for approaching pilgrims and if one is in deep contemplation, it can be seen as the ever gracious Dakshinamurti who exudes compassion and wisdom.

Subtle markings are to be seen on the rocky north face of Kailash. The image of a swan is clearly discernible. This marking is indeed auspicious: the swan symbolizes wisdom. The swan which separates milk from water is allegorically used to convey discrimination of good from evil, knowledge from ignorance. It can indicate an ascetic of a particular order or one of the vital airs. It also means progress of consciousness from *tamas* to *sattva* or from the unconsciousness of inert substance to the superconsciousness of *samadhi*. There is a subtle reference to the similarity of the soul to a swan kept in a small, reviled cage helplessly fluttering about so as to escape its confinement.

I felt nostalgic that such a great experience — the meeting of mind and body with the All Powerful and All Pervasive Lord Siva — was coming to an end. What seemed like an insurmountable proposition at the beginning of the Yatra appears child's play in retrospect. Many of us expressed the desire to undertake the Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra again. The physical travails and tribulations were all forgotten — such is the greatness, magnetism, and attraction of Kailash. Having etched this heavenly experience in my memory, reluctantly, but with a sense of fulfilment, I along with the other blessed pilgrims set out on the return journey, gazing behind at every step to behold the paradise that is Holy Kailash.

Arthur Osborne

CHRISTOPHER QUILKEY

Arthur Osborne's birth centenary was on the 25th September 2006. It was typical of this self-effacing man that we did not notice this significant date at the time and were only told by a devotee after the fact.

Arthur's life in this world was relatively short; he died at the age of 64. Probably the hardships and deprivations he suffered as a captive in Bangkok during the Second World War contributed.

He left us a legacy of writing about Sri Ramana which will live on as long as there are people who read about Bhagavan. He wrote in a simple, straightforward style. There were neither literary effects nor for that matter any superfluous words. He thought the message was more important than the messenger.

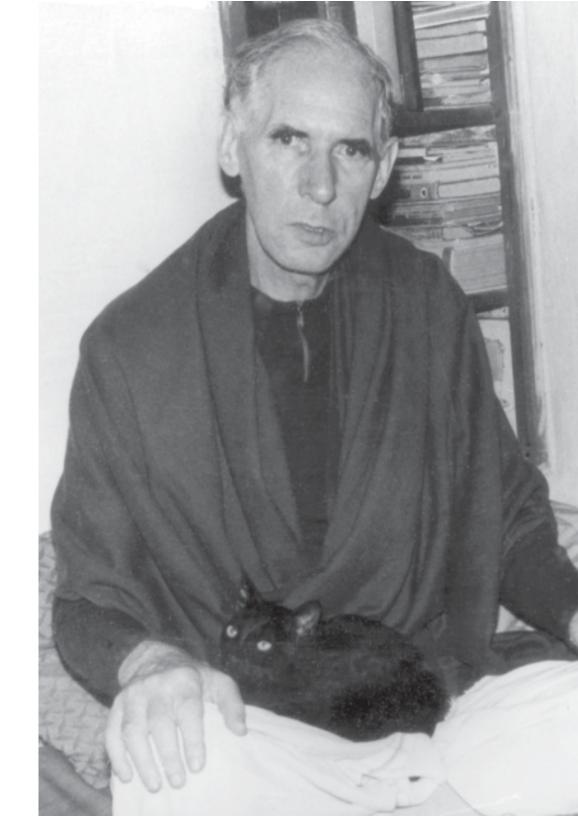
As the founder-editor of *The Mountain Path* he opened up a new world for many, particularly in the West who had trouble with Sanskrit terminology and Indian philosophical terms in general. As in his life, he went right to the heart of an argument and said what was absolutely necessary so readers could quickly and easily grasp the essentials.

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When I write an editorial it is composed in part with the spirit of Arthur's style in mind. His was the first work I read on Bhagavan and though the language of his booklet *Ramana Arunachala* looked deceptively plain and approachable, one instinctively felt that there were layers of deeper understanding which eluded comprehension. Sometimes I look at his editorials for inspiration but try not to read too much, otherwise my editorial wouldn't get written at all! Arthur in his inimitable way has said all that is necessary to clarify the path of Sri Ramana. The best one can do while doggedly following in his steps is to be true to the teaching and try to leave no individual tracks.

He was one of the few people I actually wanted to meet and when, on first arriving at Arunachala in 1975, it was with deep disappointment that I heard he was dead. He had worked extremely hard creating *The Mountain* Path with a bare minimum of facilities along with V. Ganesan, the managing editor who was a big help to him. It is hard to us in this computer age to realise the amount of labour required to type and proof-read each draft which originally he did almost entirely singlehandedly. He created a highly respected journal which became internationally known and one can easily imagine Bhagavan's Grace was solidly behind the enterprise. In 1968 with perhaps intimations that his time in this world was limited because an operation was planned which had only a fair chance of success, he wrote ten editorials, one after the other. He had a tidy mind and so, in order to leave things properly arranged for whoever would follow him, he planned and executed over two years of magazine material and then put down his pen. The final period of his life was spent mainly in silence. His final editorial was in April 1970. The next month, he died at Bangalore on the 7th May. His body was brought back to Tiruvannamalai by his adoring wife and courageous fellow traveller, Lucia. His grave lies in a quiet spot under some trees in the Osborne Compound and one can sense, if the trouble is taken to be still in that tranquil atmosphere, a serene peace that is quite subtle. It doesn't hit you in the eye with raw power but nonetheless there is a delicate undertone of acceptance and support. His discreet presence permeates the resting place.

When we read accounts of Arthur there is no doubt that he was a gentleman of the old school. He was emotionally undemonstrative but naturally polite and reserved, not out of arrogance but more out of respect



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for whoever he was with. He never uttered a word more than necessary and was content to remain perfectly quiet for any length of time, much to the discomfort of those who came to seek his company and hoped for a string of wise statements from him. He had no small talk. This was apparently quite a contrast to his younger University days when he was gregarious; a member of a debating team and various other societies which were part of the normal activites available at Oxford; but he always retained his wit and an unexpectedly delightful dry sense of humour.

Unless one knew it from his writings or his acquaintances, his placid demeanour would disguise his powerful and unrelenting dedication to the teachings of his guru. Arthur did not believe in half-measures and though he was married and had three children, his heart and soul was dedicated to the quest for truth. Like an Arthurian knight, once he had committed his life, there was no slackening nor turning back.

We could guess that from the fact that he and his wife came to the East seeking knowledge at a time when such behaviour was not only not fashionable, but considered by family and friends in Europe as, at best eccentric, at worst mad. Arthur had a brilliant academic career and was being groomed as a don for All Souls, the elite college at Oxford, when he turned his back on that scholastic tradition. He saw early that the world of the mind was inadequate for the task of understanding the meaning of life. He searched for a position which would aid him to find the time and leisure to pursue his own interests. He had two offers; the first at an archaelogical college in Palestine and the second, with the British Council in Poland. He took up the latter. It was destiny as it was there he met and married, Ludka Lipszyc, as she was then known. She was a kindred spirit and was fortunately endowed with many qualities which he lacked. Where he was an idealist and a scholar, she was practical and down to earth. She came from a line of Jewish scholars and deeply respected Arthur's fine intellect. She was fluent in six languages and he in at least four, including Arabic. Together they forged a bond that gave them the strength to face and accept all the vicissitudes to which they were subjected in the next thirty four years.

Arthur was released from prison in 1945 and came to Arunachala to be with his family and Bhagavan who blessed him. Arthur had



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known about Bhagavan's greatness for many years but due to his association with Rene Guenon had thought that though Bhagavan was a *jivan mukta*, he did not teach and therefore could not guide seekers. It was only when he came to Tiruvannamalai he realised Bhagavan was a guide. Sometime after his arrival at Arunachala, he showed Bhagavan a letter he had composed to Guenon stating that Bhagavan was a guru. Bhagavan read it carefully and gave his consent for the letter to be sent. Arthur cut his ties with the Sufi tradition which he had hitherto practised and from then on exclusively followed the teachings of Bhagavan. The subsequent passing of Bhagavan from this world in no way diminished his faith, for he knew with implicit trust and experience that Bhagavan was always available to help and guide all who sincerely ask.

He was employed as an editor at the *Indian Express* newspaper in Madras and learnt to pare down his writing to what was exact and indispensable. He later became headmaster of the Hindi High School in Calcutta and in 1958, he and Lucia finally settled for good at Tiruvannamalai when barely enough savings had been accumulated for them to live simply and even this was due almost entirely to his wife's practical nature. Arthur then devoted the rest of his life to writing about that which he loved best: the life and teachings of Sri Ramana. He wrote a biography *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* which is the best biography on Bhagavan; *Ramana Arunachala*; *Buddhism and Christianity in the Light of Hinduism.* Many of his articles from *The Mountain Path* are collected in *For Those with Little Dust* and *Be Still, It is the Wind that Sings.* Both collections reveal his range of knowledge as well as an unusual depth of insight.

He was a loyal and humble man. When he and his wife left Calcutta for the last time, his former students and teachers crowded Howrah Railway Station to say goodbye. He was astonished at their enthusiastic send-off. The railway carriage was filled with flowers and other gifts. I think that today too, if he was aware of it, he would be amazed that his memory is held in such deep reverence; but it is nonetheless true that he inspires our respect, not with extravagant praise but quiet affection for someone who never expected adulation but who gave himself sincerely to all that he thought best and lived his life with the utmost integrity at the highest possible standard to which he could aspire.

KEYWORD

Vidya

Sanskrit. Vidya: knowledge; science; learning; wisdom; insight.

Indya means knowledge. Vedanta classifies all knowledge under two categories: vastu tantra and purusha tantra. When knowledge pertains to knowing a thing as it is, such as knowing the earth revolves round the sun or a tree is a tree then it is vastu tantra. With the cognition of an object, ignorance about it disappears and knowledge automatically emerges and is true to the nature of the object; a rose cannot be known as an orange! Vastu tantra is dependent on the object (vastu) itself and leaves no room for choice. Thus, right knowledge of a thing can be only one but wrong knowledge can be many which is not knowledge at all but only ignorance parading otherwise.

Purusha tantra refers to what a person does, such as creating a pot out of existing clay with a specific end use in view. This type of knowledge is dependent upon the *subject* (person) who makes a deliberate intelligent effort. All inventions thus come under *purusha tantra* such as an electric bulb while discoveries of laws of nature such as gravitation belong to *vastu tantra*. For instance, the knowledge that electricity is simply the flow of electrons is *vastu tantra* because there is no other way in which it can be understood; however its potential can be exploited in countless ways such as a heater or a fan and therefore

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these would constitute *purusha tantra* because these involve variety, choice and creative effort. *Upasana siddhi, mantra siddhi* etc. which invoke the grace of specific deities (*ishta devatas*) are typical examples of *purusha tantra* as the results are in direct proportion to the type and extent of the efforts exercised by the recipient of the grace.

In other words, there is a *pure* knowledge (*vastu tantra*) outside our control (because it *cannot* be created but only discovered), and an *applied* knowledge which we can intelligently manipulate (*purusha tantra*). In the spiritual context, knowledge of *Brahman* is always invariant and universal irrespective of whoever gains it; *sadhana* only facilitates its *revelation* but does *not* produce, modify or refine it. Thus mystics of all climes and ages speak always the same language whenever they express their experience. Therefore, knowledge of the Self is *vastu tantra* because it is *sadhya* (already accomplished but merely awaits discovery) while *sadhana* which involves variety, choice and effort is entirely *purusha tantra*.

Liberation is always in the form of Knowledge alone (moksha jnana rupena eva) which is vastu tantra and therefore independent of the seeker's preferences or prejudices or any mental projection for that matter. Hence the *Upanishads* celebrate it as para vidya (higher knowledge) as opposed to apara vidya (inferior knowledge pertaining to objects that are non-Self). This para vidya is the ultimate purpose of Vedanta which is to end the transmigratory existence of birth and death cycle. Vedanta talks of three stages in achieving this: karma, upasana and jnana. The first two can (and should) be combined because they come under purusha tantra; they purify and prepare the mind for the third and final stage of *jnana*, which stands alone (*kaivalya*), being vastu tantra. Liberation is not dependent on our limited viewpoint or opinion. This is an important distinction because many people confuse their own individual, limited knowledge (which is at best a perspective) with that knowledge which is independent and self-sufficient. True knowledge can only be met and understood on its own terms. We cannot manipulate atma vidya and bring it to our incomplete level of understanding; we must relinquish our restricted understanding and allow ourselves to be taken over and transformed by this higher truth.

For everything else is a mere superimposition (*mithya*) which does not truly count.

Normally our mindset is incapable of appreciating anything outside (or higher than) its own series of parameters. An Eskimo cannot comprehend the educational value of a polar bear in a zoo; for the Eskimo, a bear means food that he kills to survive. Robert Browning says famously in a poem that a lumberjack will not value even a poet like him unless he too wields the axe with equal ease! It requires a deep humility to expose oneself to new knowledge and higher understanding.

Thought creates divisions in order to function. If a distinction cannot be made then there cannot be evaluation, judgment and action. Thought breaks down knowledge into component elements so that the mechanics of cause and effect can be comprehended and acted upon. Therein lies the utility of thought and hence its functional value in the plane of *vyavahara* (phenomenal existence). However, the very same tool is inadequate when we focus on *paramarthika satyam* (absolute reality). Our mind is confronted with a dilemma because the thinking process is dependent upon the capacity to differentiate; it ceases to exist as a so-called entity if its capacity to explain collapses. It cannot comprehend the ultimate reality which transcends all sense of distinction. The mind cannot break down into discrete parts that which transcends all divisions including the fundamental subject-object division.

What we solicit is a liberating knowledge that is immediate and incontrovertible (*abadhitam*). *Atma vidya* alone fulfils this criterion because it is *para vidya*. In *Vedantic* parlance, causal ignorance (*mula avidya*) can be eliminated only by immediate and direct knowledge (*aparoksha anubhava*).

If our reasoning power is unreliable and insufficient *per se*, what other valid means do we have to arrive at self-knowledge? It is through scriptural revelations (*sabda pramana*) — the evidence of others who have gone before us, discovered another terrain of consciousness and left a trail for us to pursue. In any discipline of knowledge, we are dependent on the documentation of others, be it say medicine for information as to how we should be cured. An individual does not

start from scratch every time he learns a new skill nor does he reinvent the wheel all over. Why should spiritual pursuit alone be an exception? Scriptural authority (shruti) aids our quest and an intelligent and pragmatic seeker relies on such authentic verbal testimony. To rebel against tradition and discard scriptural guidance would be unreasonable and juvenile. When we repose faith (shraddha) in shruti pramana, it opens up the possibility to learn from a competent master (*acharya*) who makes our task easier if we faithfully adhere to his instructions. However the knowledge revealed by scriptures must become our own experience (aparoksha jnanam) if the revelations are to be fulfilled. They can only show us the path but it is we who have to walk the path; sadhana is always purusha tantra and we cannot escape our responsibility. This inner journey cannot be undertaken without the staff of faith (*shraddha*). We travel as far as possible with reason without ever contradicting it but when the teacher or scripture dwells on that which is beyond reason we must rely on faith to accept and follow their advice until we can verify through our own experience what they taught.

One should be careful however not to be trapped by mere erudition. Scholarship is infinite and can make one go round in endless circles of smug complacence. To know Truth one must dedicate heart and mind to the quest. Shastra vichara can help prepare the ground but cannot catapult us on its own into a quantum leap beyond the known. That can take place only in *nidhidhyasana* where one dwells in thought-free awareness of the Self. There is no substitute for immediate knowledge (aparoksha jnanam). "An intelligent seeker who has studied the scriptures well enough to grasp their essence but intent on gaining the experience of truth must unhesitatingly give up fancy for all book knowledge (shastra *vasana*) like one who discards the chaff and goes for the grain." Thus one goes from vaak vichara (reflecting on verbal testimony) to atma vichara (dwelling on the Self) until one attains anubhava siddhi (Self-Realisation). The direct knowledge that one is not the body is itself the experience. When the ancient link with the body is severed with regard to one's identity there arises an experiential clarity.

Ulladu Narpadu

Based on Lakshmana Sharma's Commentary

Verse Thirteen

S. RAM MOHAN

13. The Self alone, which is consciousness and knowledge, is real. Variegated knowledge is Ignorance. That Ignorance too, does not exist independently of that Self, which is pure Consciousness, just as jewels, in all their variety, though unreal, are not in substance independent of gold, which is real.

Commentary

That Self, which, at the end of the preceding verse was declared to be 'Right Knowledge (Consciousness)' is declared here to be the Sole Reality, Brahman, because He is the One without a second, existing without change. This meaning is conveyed by the words: 'Only the Self alone which is Consciousness, is Real.' This confirms the teaching in the first benedictory verse, that the Reality, the Self, is both Reality (*Sat*) and Consciousness (*Chit*), which are the Nature of Brahman.

¹ Amrita Bindu Upanisad, v.18.

"Is not this manifold World, comprising the soul, the creator, and the outside world, real?" The answer is: "Variegated knowledge, is Ignorance." Manifold knowledge is the world-appearance, because apart from the knowledge of the world that arises in the mind, there is no world. The latter is not an objective reality. To be One, without anything else, sentient or insentient, is the mark of the Real. To appear as many is the mark of the unreal.

The statement that the world is ignorance means that ignorance is its origin. Ignorance here means the ego-sense, which is not an existent entity. It means the absence of knowledge. Accordingly, it follows that this ignorance is a non-entity, like darkness. This is conveyed by the words, "That (Ignorance) too, is unreal as it is."

Vedanta concludes that ignorance is not something that exists. If it were an entity, it would not cease by the dawn of right knowledge (*jnana*). Whereas, when that experience dawns, not ignorance alone, but all that has come out of it, the ego, the mind, the world and bondage, cease. Second, if ignorance is taken as an entity, the world and the bondage that bind the soul to the world would also be real, which is contrary to Advaita. For the benefit of unripe disciples, who ask what is the cause of bondage, it is said that it is due to ignorance. Ultimately it is made clear that this ignorance also does not exist. Hence the question, "How did this ignorance come to me," is absurd. The purpose of that question is to try and find a relationship between the supreme and the bondage of ignorance. No such relationship exists.

In the true state, which alone matters, the Self alone is. "This Self is unrelated," says an *Upanishad*. The World is styled *maya*, an illusion. Brahman did not really become the world. This is the truth of non-becoming, which is ultimate conclusion of the *Upanishads*. Bhagavan gives us the same answer. From the stand point of the Sage, nothing at all came into existence, neither the ignorance, the soul, or the world; so there is no bondage, no aspirant to deliverance, nor is there even deliverance; for what exists is only the ever-free real Self. Bhagavan said that Sri Krishna first taught this final truth to Arjuna — but because he became perplexed, being unable to accept this truth, Sri Krishna then taught and expounded various other yogas to him.



28 Jayanti

Really, there is no relationship between the world and the Self. Yet in the course of teaching, some sort of relationship has to be stated; but this does not affect the reality in any way; *It remains unrelated*.

The corollary of ignorance, that is, the world, seems to be real. This is because it has a substratum, the reality, which is the universal real Self (*paramatma*). The world is an imaginary superimposition on the reality-consciousness of the Self, and has no existence of its own. The Self alone exists in its own right, because in the experience of that Self, It shines as the sole reality without the world-appearance. It is for this reason it is said that the Self is real and the world unreal (*maya*).

When it is said that the world is unreal, what is meant is that the names and forms that appear by the mental power of imagination are unreal. But because the substratum, which remains after all these are removed by illumination, is real, it is also said that the world is real. But this must not be taken as contradicting the statement that the world is unreal. Bhagavan said that the two apparently contradictory statements must be so understood as not to nullify each other. They are reconcilable and must be taken to be two partial statements, each complementary to the other; they give different aspects of the truth about the world. The statement that the world is unreal must be modified thus: the world is not real in its own right; it is not self-existent. The other statement must be taken to mean that because the substratum of the world-appearance is real, the world *is not utterly unreal*, like the barren woman's son.

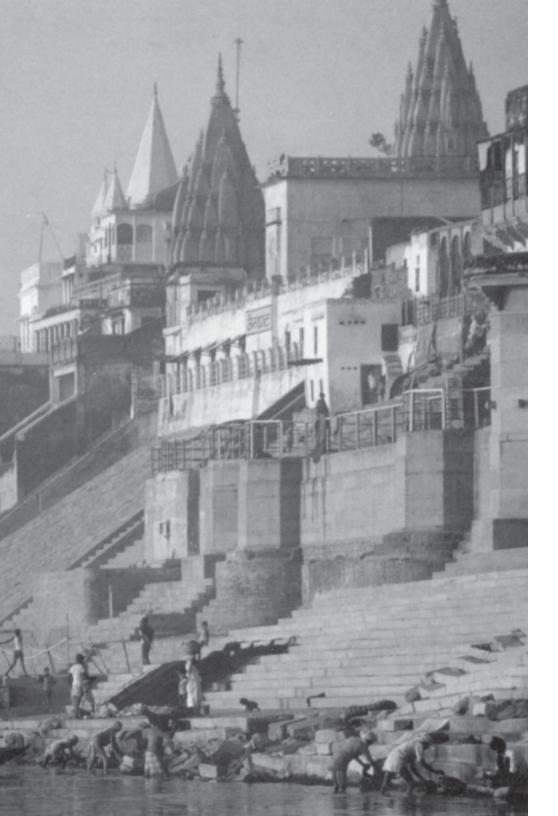
The analogy of gold and jewels is given to illustrate this truth. Ornaments made of gold are gold all the time; before being made into ornaments they were gold; and also when they are melted they are gold. Thus, gold is the unchanging substratum while the ornaments are many. According to the test of reality, gold is real in relation to the gold jewels, while the jewels are comparatively unreal, not real *in their own right*. In the sentence, "Jewels in all their variety, though unreal, are not a substance independent of gold, which is real," the adjective "unreal" and "real" have been deliberately placed as qualifying jewels and gold; and Bhagavan's intention in this placement must be

understood. When the jewels are looked upon as gold, the jewel forms will not be clearly seen, and therefore the jewel-forms are unreal. When they are specifically looked upon as jewels, they will conceal the substance, the gold, which though concealed, is real. Some assert that both the forms and the substance are equally real. But if both are to be taken as real, the analogy would not be appropriate to the teaching and it is to prevent this possible misconception that Bhagavan has placed these adjectives in their proper places. So the meaning conveyed is this: Just as the jewels, which are manifold and therefore unreal, have as their substratum the gold, which being one and unchanged, is real, so this unreal world-knowledge, which is ignorance, manifested as the world, has as its substratum the real Self which is Consciousness, and therefore appears as real.

If Bhagavan had not purposely placed here the words "unreal" and "real", it would be possible to interpret the teaching thus: "The jewels are not only golden, but their differences of names and forms also are real; in the same way, though the world is substantially only Brahman, its varieties of names and forms and other differences are also real." This is a misinterpretation, and it was to prevent this that Bhagavan placed these words as he did. He emphasized the same idea in *Ekanina Panchakam*.

Bhagavan states that the non-dual Self is pure awareness. It is not conditioned by space, time and causation. The pluralistic universe, on the contrary, is an illusion. During deep sleep (*sushupti*) it is not seen. And at the dawn of knowledge, it vanishes. Hence, it is ephemeral and cannot be true. *The knowledge of what is not true is ignorance*. But as no thing can exist apart from the Self, ignorance also must lie there. Just as the darkness in the room obscured the room, the ignorance which is located on the Self veils it.

However, from the standpoint of absolute reality, there is no ignorance at all. It is only from the standpoint of relativity, we talk about ignorance. Thus, from the statement that the world is unreal, there is also the implication that it is unreal even while the world appears, due to the prevalence of its cause, ignorance. This meaning is also conveyed later in verse 37.



The Globalisation of Vedic Thought

M. S. BALASUBRAMANIAN

When speaking of globalisation one need not be restricted to capital markets and the amalgamation of world culture through television, the internet and cell phones. Most of us imagine that globalisation is a recent, unidirectional influence, specifically, of Western cultural practices and technologies on so-called 'developing' countries, among them India. But in fact cultural diffusion is a natural process that has been underway for centuries, even millennia, with no single geographic site of origin. It engenders among diverse societies a mutual assimilation of ethical, scientific, religious and philosophical ideas.

With respect to Vedic thought, few would deny the global impact that Indian spirituality has had in the last four decades: the signs are visible in every nation on earth. But less obvious is the extent to which basic Indian metaphysical and theological paradigms have been absorbed and integrated early-on into the cultural fabric of Western (and other) societies, religions and languages.

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The following few lines are a brief sampling of this historically extended 'reverse' globalisation and looks at how basic insights indigenous to India have seeded and taken root in Western (and other) cultures and languages.

Word Migrations

As one begins to trace lineages of ideas and innovation, a vast matrix of sharing reveals itself. Linguists and linguistic ethnographers have long delighted in exploring cultural diffusion through the medium of words and their etymologies. Especially interesting are words and cognates that have taken root in diverse languages. This one might call *linguistic globalisation*. The subject is so vast and interesting that we couldn't even begin to look at it here. But it is one of the areas of research one might turn to in determining the influence of ancient India on world culture.

Sanskritists over the centuries have consistently pointed out numerous ancient cognate migrations out of India. Poignant examples abound but just to give a couple: the cognate¹ 'gn' in agni (fire) expresses itself in the Latin ignire ('set on fire') and ignis ('fire') and in English words like 'igneous' and 'ignite'. The English 'kindle' derived from the Old Norse 'kindill', meaning 'torch', bears this Sanskrit vestige as well. Similarly 'gn' of gnana meaning 'knowledge' is conveyed in the Greek 'gnosis', the English 'knowledge'², as well as the German 'kenden', the French 'connaitre', the Spanish 'conocer', etc. Pitru prefigures the Latin 'Pater' which means (and gives rise to the English,) 'father' (and 'Vater'³ in German).⁴

Diffusion, whether linguistic, cultural or technological, can be said potentially to move outward in all directions with everywhere as its centre. In other words, cultures interact with one another and a gradual globalisation, one could say, has been underway since the beginning.⁵ The essential point about the Sanskrit examples above as well as the abundance of Sanskrit cognates occurring in other ancestral languages is that it suggests the extent to which ancient India was a centre of early civilization and a major influence on near and distant peoples and languages. Sanskrit's prevalence prior to other primordial seed language systems (such as Greek and Latin) makes it difficult to overestimate its influence, however ancient, on contemporary world languages.⁶

Idea Migrations: Freud's Ego

Unrelated but equally exciting to look at is how ideas from India have dispersed and settled abroad. Again the examples are too numerous to even merely list here but many of them the casual observer might simply take for granted. Take for instance the contemporary idea of 'ego' as commonly known in the West. Owing to modern psychology and the psychotherapy movement, 'ego' is now a commonly used term. Few, however, are aware how recent is its advent into the European vernacular. Surprisingly the word came into common English usage less than a hundred years ago⁸. Its use among academics at the turn of the century was born with the translation of Freud's writings. The

¹ The very meaning of *cognate* — 'born together' — hints at the dialectical and mutually causal nature of language development.

 $^{^{\}rm 2}$ The guttural consonants in these two cases have become silent.

³ In this case the English 'f' and German 'V' are phonetically identical. The bilabial 'pa' is phonetically very near 'fa' and therefore the two are often interchanged among various languages.

⁴ Swami Shantananda and K. V. Subramanian pointed out these examples, among others, in private conversations.

⁵ It has been theorized that archetypal paradigms within thought, culture and technology may also arise simultaneously *without* direct contact (between societies). The 'hundredth monkey theory' holds that there is some hidden factor, an unidentifiable communication that allows cultures at great distances to make simultaneous innovations without direct contact.

⁶ Of course, there are a number of later direct exportations of Sanskrit terms such as among Buddhist societies of Asia.

⁷ It is important to point out that Freud's 'ego' does not have the same sense of 'ego' as used in Vedantic parlance.

⁸ Naturally, the word was already important among intellectuals. Descartes' *Cogito* was revolutionary in that it articulated and formulated a (Western) subjectivity that had not been there before. While Descartes 'evil demon' hinted at alternate consciounesses within a single mind, his subjectivity was not used in the way Freud and the subsequent Western psychology used it (under the sway, one could argue, of Eastern thought).

translator was a Cambridge classics student, steeped in the study of Greek and Latin, who, instead of rendering Freud's *ich*, *er*, and *es* with English equivalents, 'I', 'he' and 'it', chose the Latin terms, *ego*, *superego* and *id*. In the decades that followed, Freud's ideas took root in Western consciousness and this conception of a multivalent 'I'-entity became second-nature. The burning question: where did Freud get it from?

No doubt, prior to Freud, the English language had the first-person pronoun. It also had 'soul', 'spirit', 'persona', 'nature', 'character', 'psyche' and 'self'. But none hit the mark like Freud's *ego*, an 'I'-centre among other centres in consciousness.⁹. Today it is such a familiar and accepted notion that it is plainly hard to imagine that Europeans did not really use it prior to Freud ¹⁰. This is no doubt one of the reasons Freud was almost an instant success (at least, among intellectuals) — his 'discovery' filled a theoretical vacuum for the then fledgling Western psychology. In short, it was an idea long overdue¹¹.

Tracing Freud's 'discovery', we see the influence of Schopenhauer who was an ardent student of Indian scriptures. Sprinkled throughout Schopenhauer's writings are praises of the Upanishads¹² and he gives credit to the Upanishads for the formulation of his most cherished philosophical conceptions, among them his 'Will'¹³, which is openly based in the Upanishadic notions *Brahman* and *Atman*. Sensing the significance the conceptual innovations (coming from India) would eventually have on Western thought, he made the following prediction:

"The world is about to see a revolution in thought more extensive and more powerful than that which was witnessed by the Renaissance of Greek literature." ¹⁴ Indeed revolutions in Western thought did occur, Freudian psychology only one among them.

Close examination reveals that Schopenhauer never actually arrived at *ego* in the Freudian sense. Nevertheless he laid the ground, a ground that had been invariably fertilized by Hindu *sastra*. ¹⁵

This is just one recent example. But few in the West have taken notice of the theoretical indebtedness to Vedic thought of this central feature of Western psychology.

Early Idea Migrations: Classical Greece

In his recently published *Journey of the Upanishads to the West*, Swami Tathagatananda provides a compelling narrative on the subject of borrowings from India within Western philosophy, literature, mythology, linguistics, science and the history of ideas, an analysis spanning history back to the classical period. Through the writings and "voices of Western scholars" he traces a number of major paradigm shifts in Western thinking to India. Cross-cultural examinination of the history of Greek civilization and its advances in various fields of endeavour reveal that many of its greatest accomplishments were preceded on the subcontinent and, in some cases, received direct impetus from the Hindu *sastras*. A couple of examples of this are the decimal scale of numeration found in India as far back as 3000 B.C., significantly earlier than its appearance in Greece, and Pythagoras' famed theorem, the quadrature of the hypotenuse. According to the nineteenth German

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⁹ Thus constituting, one might argue, the first elaborate Western theory of consciousness.

¹⁰ A nascent psychology and specifically, a first theory of consciousness, appeared within the German Idealist tradition, (e.g. Soren Kierkegaard) just prior to Freud.

¹¹ But one that existed for millennia in the East, though admittedly, in various (and more nuanced) forms.

¹² Of the Upanishads, Schopenhauer wrote: "... Every line is of such strong, determined, and consistent meaning! And on every page we encounter deep original, lofty thoughts, while the whole is suffused with high and holy seriousness." [Originally from A. Hillebrandt's *Upanishaden: Altindische Weisheit*, quoted in *Journey of the Upanishads to the West* by Swami Tathagatananda. p. 272.]

¹³ Journey of the Upanishads to the West, by Swami Tathagatananda. p. 272-4. 2005 Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.

¹⁴ Journey of the Upanishads to the West by Swami Tathagatananda. p. 274. 2005Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.

¹⁵ 'Ego' in contemporary Western psychology maps directly neither onto ego (*ahamkara*) in the discourse of Eastern spirituality nor onto the Upanishadic *Atman*. Unlike *ahamkara* the ego of contemporary Western psychology is value-neutral and carries with it some of the 'true-self' connotations of *Atman*. At the same time it is not transcendent or divine. It should be added that the English 'I', Dutch 'ik' and the German 'ich' are etymologically related to the Latin 'ego'.

¹⁶ From a commentary by Professor Joanne Kilgour Dowdy of Kent State University (printed on the book jacket of *Journey of the Upanishads*).

Sanskritist, George Thibaut, the latter is very likely a direct borrowing from the *Sulvasutras*, an ancient Hindu geometry text, in which the theorem first appeared, predating Pythagoras by several hundred years.

There are numerous indications that Pythagoras studied the Upanishads, the *Brahmanas* and other Indian works¹⁷ and indeed, philosophical notions of a profoundly Indian flavour abound in his teachings, teachings that later came to influence the whole of Greek philosophy.

Among later students of Pythagoras' teachings were Plato and Aristotle. Plato's *Republic*, according to some scholars, recasts (*a la* Pythagoras) basic themes found in the *Manu Dharma Sastra*. ¹⁸ The "Orphic myth of Zeus (who swallowed Phanes, the offspring of the great 'World Egg' and then formed the universe within himself) also closely resembles the tenth book of *Manu Dharma Sastra* where the Supreme Soul produces the Golden Egg, *Brahmanda*, by thought and appears as *Brahma*." ¹⁹ It is this teaching from Pythagoras that solidified Plato's understanding of the soul as eternal.

Other examples can be found: The *myth of the cave* looks a lot like the Vedantic doctrine of maya²⁰ while the Platonic *classification of beings* appears to be rooted in the four *ashramas*.²¹

Plotinus, the Roman philosopher of the 3rd century, even began a journey to India but was frustrated in his attempt. Scholars believe his philosophical system owes much to *Sankhya-Yoga*. The great Augustine of Hippo who was influenced by Plotinus, had a profound impact on much of the classical Chritian theology.

It is hard to trace with certainty the transmission of these ideas and stories²² and scholars are in dispute. However, in the case of classical Greece, earlier 'philologists' and classicists' presuppositions and prejudices with respect to ancient Greece — as the originator and first

formulator of the basic seed-features of Western civilization (and its sole indebtedness to ancient Egypt) — are now giving way to a broader, organic understanding that additionally recognizes influences from the East through Asia Minor. As for the intellectual innovations mentioned above one thing seems certain: their appearance in ancient India predates their emergence in 5th century Greece.²³

The Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period

By the Middle Ages and the early modern period, idea migration and the question of direct diffusion is no longer speculative. Through Greek and Roman writers, Europe "inherited its imaginative impressions of India." Already in the 13th century a number of Indian texts were floating around Europe, among them the Panchatantra fables (known from Arabic and Persian translations). In the seventeenth century, translations into European language of the Vedas, the Upanishads and other Sanskrit texts appeared. Eighteenth century missionary-linguists provided Europe with its first Sanskrit grammars and numerous important translations were to see the light of day, among them, Charles Wilkins' Bhagavat-Geeta in 1784. By the early nineteenth century, already a vibrant and well-established Sanskrit scholarship was underway in Germany (and elsewhere), having embraced the Upanishads and made them available to the broader academic world. From these early translations and commentaries, translations into other languages ensued and philosophers, theologians and academicians took them up with great interest. Virtually every man of lettres of the period — Herder, Goethe, the Schlegel brothers, Humboldt, Fichte, Schelling, among others — were familiar with them. Even Kant, arguably the most significant European thinker of the modern era, had some familiarity with Sanskrit as well as with Hindu texts.²⁴ The mid-

¹⁷ Journey of the Upanishads, p. 108-110.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 115.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 117.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 118.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 115.

²² It has been suggested that in the course of his travels (after the death of Socrates), Plato went to the banks of the Ganges. But there is no firm evidence about this. *Ibid*, p. 119.

²³ Historical contact between India and the West is established with the invasion of Alexander the Great. *Ibid.* p. 179.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 253. Though there is disagreement among scholars about the extent to which Kant studied Sanskrit texts, it has been suggested that while his distinction between 'thing-in-itself' and phenomena has a Greek origin, its inspiration may well have come from the doctrine of *maya*.

nineteenth century saw the first (French and Italian) translations of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* among other literary and sacred texts. Simultaneously the prodigious work of Max Meuller at Oxford gave Indian thought its full due among English speakers.

By the late 19th century, the secret was out, the 'renaissance' was fully underway and the seeds of Vedic thought were being sown in innumerable ways throughout Europe and elsewhere. Every European university worth its name established departments of Indology and Asian studies and scholars began to uncover the vast literary treasures of ancient India.

Concluding Postscript: Reassessing India's Place in History

The foregoing is only an overview and only scratches at the surface. Even in its 600-plus pages, *Journey of the Upanishads to the West* does not exhaust its subject. Yet what an important starting point it is in reevaluating existing historiographies!

If the Indian psyche is still under the sway of seven hundred years of foreign rule then India has yet to fully liberate herself and fully to speak for herself. Indeed the tale of India — her place in history and in the world of ideas, her character, her spirit, in short, her *story* — may not as yet have been fully told.

Swami Tathagatananda has taken a significant step forward in this regard. He has presented a highly intelligent, well-documented reassessment of history with respect to the achievements of "the civilization and spiritually-oriented culture of India". ²⁵ He tells of the Vedic tradition's place on the world stage and situates ancient India at a centre position, which she indeed deserves. His work should prove invaluable not only in helping realign the global academic discourse in the face of Eurocentric historiographies but also in serving as a platform for the unfolding of this story, a narrative that needs telling not solely by Western academics but as well by sons and daughters of the soil.

Remembering Bhagavan

T. R. KANAKAMMAL

Early Days in the Kitchen

During the initial days of the Ashram, conditions were very simple and the facilities meagre. It was a hand-to-mouth existence. Cooking in the kitchen was done in turn by the lady cooks.

One day when Shantammal had just finished preparing food sufficient only for the Ashram inmates, a party of a dozen or so guests, eager to have Bhagavan's darshan, showed up. It was a hot day and the Ashram, in those days being on the outskirts of town, was far from the nearest public place to eat. The approach of the lunch bell was imminent and Shantammal was in a quandary. What she had cooked would not suffice for both inmates and the newly arrived guests. Neither was there enough time to cook additional food. Even if none of the guests asked permission to have lunch at the Ashram, Shantammal was pretty sure that Bhagavan, in his characteristic way,

²⁵ Journey of the Upanishads, p. xvi.

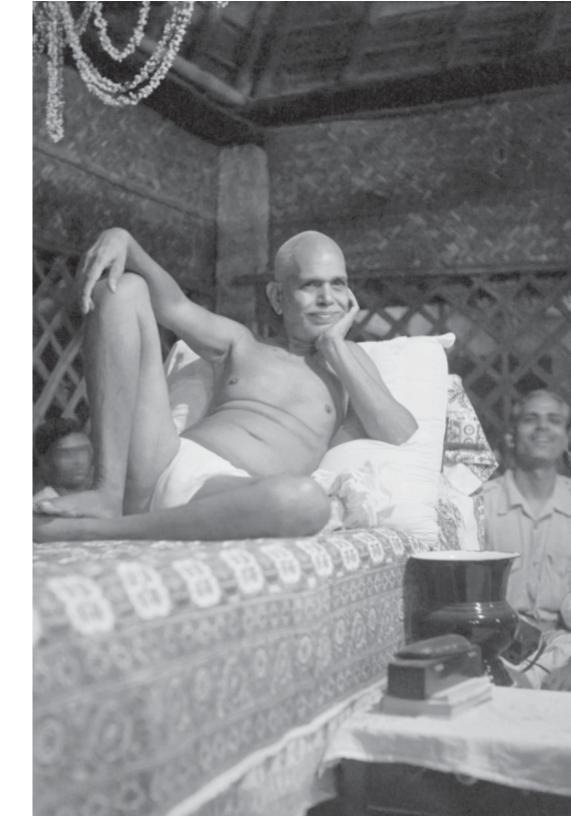
would wave them into the dining hall with his stick at the sound of the bell. After mustering up the courage, she approached Bhagavan, "Bhagavan, food has only been prepared for the inmates." But Bhagavan didn't even appear to have heard her. Shantammal went back to the kitchen and wrung her hands in despair, expressing her predicament to Madhava Swami. The latter replied instantly, "Don't worry; we will lay out leaves for everyone but serve only a little food as *prasad* to each."

The bell rang and all were seated before leaf plates. Every time Shantammal went to the rice pot to take out rice, trepidation seized her. But lo and behold! the supply was inexhaustible. All ate to their hearts content and everybody was served liberally. Enough was left in the pot to feed a dozen over and above those who had eaten.

During the early evenings, when few people were about, Bhagavan would normally sit in a chair on the veranda outside the hall. On the evening of the same day, Shantammal approached him reverentially and said, "Wonder of wonders, Bhagavan! Today there was only enough food for the inmates, yet it turned out to be sufficient for a dozen visitors in addition and there was enough left to feed even a dozen more. What a great *siddhi* Bhagavan displayed today!" Bhagavan answered, "Oh, I remember your saying something about food before lunch." Then in a seemingly casual manner, he asked, "Who did the cooking today?" Taking it to be a routine question, one that he often asked, she unsuspectingly said, "I did, Bhagavan." At once, he replied, "Then the *siddhi* is yours!"

The Sixth Kosa

It was an unusually cold winter and this particular day among the coldest. Manavasi Ramaswamy Iyer had two shirts made because he wanted Bhagavan to be warm with something more adequate to protect him from the biting cold than the usual loin-cloth and the occasional cotton dhoti over his top. Lacking the courage to present them personally, he placed them on the stool in front of Bhagavan's sofa while Bhagavan was taking a walk on the Hill. Upon his return, Bhagavan saw them and questioned the attendant. Just then Manavasi put in his appearance and murmured inaudibly, "Bhagavan, it was I



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who put them there. It is very cold Bhagavan and...." But Bhagavan interrupted him, saying, "Did I complain that it was cold?"

"No, Bhagavan, I took the initiative. I thought Bhagavan should protect himself."

But Bhagavan wouldn't hear of it: "No, take them away".

Manavasi persisted and yet nothing would make Bhagavan accept them. Finally, with a tinge of frustration, Bhagavan said, "I already wear five shirts," referring to the *panchakosas*, "Is a sixth one necessary?"

Details and Consistency

Devaraja Mudaliar was a lawyer by profession. He had a highly developed legal mind which railed against inconsistency in any form. He also liked to have every detail accounted for.

When Tamil poets such as Manikkavachakar and Jnanasambandar alluded to their renunciation in verse, they would write something like: "I gave up my spirit, my body, and my personal possessions." But Bhagavan, in one of his verses, does not include "personal possessions" among the list of the items which he renounced. Devaraja took him to task on this point wanting to know why Bhagavan did not mention giving up his personal belongings.

Bhagavan replied, "I didn't have any belongings. How can I give up what I don't have?" But Devaraja Mudaliar was not satisfied. "So, Bhagavan, you mean Manikkavachakar and Jnanasambandar *had* possessions?"

Bhagavan: "I don't know about them. But I didn't have any so I didn't write it that way!"

'I' is a Door

Part Four:

The Medicine ('I am' is a door)

PHILIP RENARD

Advaita of the twentieth century, it would be useful to conclude this series with a summary. ¹ I would like to do this on the basis of the concept 'I am', which was described in Part Two of 'I is a door', which focused on Nisargadatta Maharaj. As far as I know, Nisargadatta never pronounced "'I' is a door." Yet he did, in fact, say a few times: "'I am' is a door." As described in Part Two, 'I am' for Nisargadatta was a designation for something very specific, some 'level' between the levels of the Absolute and the individual. From the perspective of the Advaita tradition, this might be called revolutionary: it is true this concept had already been given to him by his teacher, Siddharameshwar Maharaj,

¹ Panchakosa: the five coverings or spiritual sheaths, which sorround the atma: annamayakosa, pranamayakosa, mananmayakosa, vijnanamaykosa and anandamayakosa.

¹ *The Mountain Path.* Vol.42, No.1, Jayanti 2004; *The Mountain Path.* Vol.42, No.2, Aradhana, 2004; *The Mountain Path.* Vol.43, No.2, Aradhana 2006.

² I am That, p. 323-324 and 442. Incidentally he called it *the* door, not a door.

however, neither Ramana Maharshi nor Atmananda for example, interpreted the expression 'I am' this way. Ramana for instance said: "You say ... 'I am speaking', 'I am working', etc. Hyphenate 'I am' in all of them. Thus I-AM. *That* is the abiding and fundamental Reality. ... If [the mind] is turned within, it becomes still in course of time and that 'I-AM' alone prevails. 'I-AM' is the whole Truth." In the case of Ramana's 'I am' there is no question whatsoever of a temporal phenomenon, a level that can still be transcended.

I have the impression that Nisargadatta's use of the expression 'I am' as a kind of in-between level still causes much confusion with readers. Hence, I want to go more deeply again into this in-between level and into a possible connection between this with both other teachers — if necessary, by the use of other terms.

As a starting point I want to use the quote that was also highlighted in Part Two. That quote ends as follows: "That knowledge of 'I Am' is the greatest foe and the greatest friend. Although it might be your greatest foe, if you propitiate it properly, it will turn around and lead you to the highest state." This statement puts into words the great mystery of duality; of something that simultaneously is true and untrue; that simultaneously is your biggest friend and your worst enemy. Nisargadatta repeatedly calls the knowledge 'I am' the beginning of all duality, the root of it. 5

It is important to see that this statement refers to a beginning that can be observed; something that can be observed like an object. At least, that is partly the case. The point is that it is an object as well as not being an object. It is right here that everything comes together. If you recognize this, you can also understand why Nisargadatta talks so utterly paradoxically about it. The feeling 'I am' is subject as well as

object: at this point the true moment of separation occurs. It is mercurial, super-fast. At one moment it seems to be object, the next moment it seems to be subject. It is the subject because it is the *experiencing* element in all experiences, and the object because it can be observed as *experience itself*, an object that is always the same. Nisargadatta's words about this come down to 'you are this — no, on the contrary, you are not this' (sometimes even in the same sentence, for example, "this knowledge which you are, which is an outcome of the food body, is not you"7).

What is so important about the the remark that the 'I am'-feeling is (also) an object is that it is easy for everybody to make contact with this objective aspect. Everybody is used to dealing with objects. Nisargadatta is saying that you are permitted to start with the easiest, the directly *tangible*, experiential aspect. Although this object 'I am' can be your enemy, you can at least notice it, feel it, experience it as such, by paying full attention to it. In fact, it is exposed in this way. "Once you catch hold of that principle which moves about in various disguises there is an end to illusion."

The mistake, the belief in duality as being reality already starts *prior* to the person. The mistake already starts at a level you may call universal. This is the level all Holy Books and mythologies are speaking about: 'the fall'.9 The multiplicity of individuals directly stems from this point, and yet, *within* all these individuals, this point — the 'I am'-ness, is identical.¹⁰ By reducing it to a simple object, it can be useful because it isolates the misconception of multiplicity. This way it can serve as an instrument, not unlike a microscope or telescope.¹¹ It sharpens our eye as to what exactly is this birth.

³ Talks, Talk 503. The hyphen Ramana is emphasizing here is may be a remnant of his combination 'I-am-I', which was a sort of elucidation on his 'I-I'. See the article by David Godman in *The Mountain Path*, June 1991, p. 82.

⁴ *Prior*, p. 13.

⁵ For instance: *Seeds*, p. 83 and 98; *Prior*, p. 76; *Consciousness*, p. 9.

⁶ "The point at which everything rises; the source and the end is the same point." *Prior*, p. 27.

⁷ Prior, p. 62. Italics mine, PhR.

⁸ *Seeds*, p. 135.

⁹ In this context Ramana says: "All scriptures are only for the purpose of investigating if there are two consciousnesses." *Talks*, Talk 199.

¹⁰ See for instance *Prior*, p. 19 and 47.

¹¹ On the example of the telescope: *Seeds*, p. 193; and *Nectar*, p. 10-11.

'consciousness'.

'the touch'. 'Experience Itself' The Absolute

(Para Brahman / Nirguna Brahman / Parama Atman)

Awareness (Chit / Sanvid)

No-knowledge

I AM

Inana (Understanding / Knowledge)

Saguna Brahman / Ishvara (God)

Atman (Self)

Shuddha Sattva (Pure Beingness)

I AM

Maya (illusion, suggestion)

sattva, rajas & tamas (the guna's, qualities)

mana (knowledge)

a-jnana / a-vidya (ignorance)

'causal body'
(slumbering germ of individuality (fina-tra) and separatedness)

fascination, fixation, identification

multiplicity of individuals (jitu's), each with a 'subtle' (psychic-energetic) and a physical body



If we truly realize that this universal feeling 'I am' is the root of all separation and dilemma, then the implication is that one can no longer believe that this root is to be discovered in your personal past, with its karmic content. The root is universal, and the power of what you may call your personal past or karma only provides it with a specific content. The root precedes this 12 — it is on the hinge between freedom and bondage.

As the root is still on the borderline, it can be used as a medicine. ¹³ It is a medicine that cures you from falling under the spell of the belief in a separate person. In all teachings the liberating, 'healing' element is the most important aspect. Hence, I want to specifically treat the 'I am'-ness as a *medicine*, and to take it literally for the moment, as a pill (see the picture) for the simple reason that the feeling 'I am' is also an object that can be observed.

When Nisargadatta referred to 'I am', he often used the terms chaitanya and chetana, which have been translated by the word, 'consciousness'. This word remains tricky, because most teachers use the term 'consciousness' to precisely refer to the Ultimate. Because of this difference we should always clearly understand that we are referring to 'consciousness-as-meant-by-Nisargadatta'. Nisargadatta sometimes defined this consciousness as "that which gives sentience to the person". 14 On another occasion, he used a synonym "the primordial experience"15 (as being different from 'an experience' — by which he meant: "an event becomes an experience only when I am emotionally involved"16). He described the proportion between the different levels

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¹² See Seeds, p. 42: "This 'I amness' is there first, isn't it? – primary. That 'I' must be there first before you receive this sickness of samskara."

¹³ On the term 'medicine': *Experience*, p. 35; *Ultimate*, p. 31.

¹⁴ Prior, p. 25. Translator S.K. Mullarpattan adds to this, in a personal letter, the definition "the very spirit of being Sentience".

¹⁵ Nectar, p. 91. See also the very clarifying description by Michael Comans on 'Experience Itself' in the texts of early Advaita: The Method of Early Advaita Vedanta. Delhi: M. Banarsidass, 2000; p. 141, 300-311, 351.

¹⁶ *I am That*, p. 317.

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as follows: "There can be no experience of the Absolute, as it is beyond all experience. On the other hand, the Self is *the experiencing factor in every experience* and thus, in a way, validates the multiplicity of experiences." In other words: first there is the Absolute, which cannot be experienced. Next, completely spontaneous and unexplainable, is the Self, the 'primordial experience', which imparts the temporary reality to experiences.

This is in accordance with the linguistic usage of Atmananda, who used the English term 'experience' literally, though he probably would not have interpreted it as a general term of convenience for a kind of in-between level. In *Atma-Darshan* he says: "In one's Experience — strictly so called — there is neither thought nor external object present. It is the state in which all alone one abides in one's Self. Objects of perception being believed to be the cause of Experience, tempt the ignorant. ... But no such cause appears in one's Experience. It follows that Experience has no cause." 18

Atmananda repeatedly used a capital E to emphasize what he meant with Experience, as appears from the following quotation. "If the experience has many objects, it is no Experience. You are superimposing objects upon your Experience. Your Experience is one and the same, always." Elsewhere he has clearly said that Experience is something where in fact diversity does not exist: "Two are not seen. Experience is one thing. You experience only one thing. … Your Experience is one thing — your Experience is only in relation to the One. You experience only One thing, One thing." A large part of Atmananda's teaching consists of the invitation to find out for yourself what an apparently commonplace element such as 'experience' *really* is: "Always contemplating the nature of Experience itself, will bring about this merger [of thoughts]." ²¹

It is about this nature, the *true* nature, also here in this article. The pill depicted here, is divided into two halves by a groove, in order to indicate the primordial separation, the place of the possible 'fall' or temptation. Also it is the place where 'the enemy' can convert into 'the friend'. Above the groove has been indicated that which is the *true nature* of the entire pill — that which, in fact, is the essence of all aspects of the pill. The terms underneath the groove indicate the general characteristics of the pill, and show something of its veiling element of temptation and identification. Actually, of course, the elements depicted here as two halves are completely interwoven. The pill illustrates 'the singleness of the twofold': the staggering multiple has been reduced to a simple 'two'.

There are some terms which can be used for the entire pill, for above, as well as beneath the groove: 'I am', 'Being', 'Beingness', 'Experience', 'Presence', 'Inana' — and especially the multi-

¹⁷ I am That, p. 334.

¹⁸ Atma-Darshan. Tiruvannamalai: Sri Vidya Samiti, 1946; ch. 12; p. 20-21. Initial capitals inserted on the basis of the quote of note 18. See also Atma-Darshan, chapter 19, on the two aspects of Consciousness. In connection to the present article it is interesting to mention a passage in which Atmananda offers a classification of three stages. He does so in reply to a question about sphurana (a term often used by Ramana, which was highlighted in the first part of "I' is a door', that was devoted to Ramana): "The natural state of the 'I-Principle' in man is unmanifested. This becomes manifest in the case of human activities in three distinct stages: 1. The unmanifested state of luminosity itself. 2. Becoming manifest as 'I know I am' or as Self-luminosity. 3. Becoming manifested as objects. The second of the above three stages is not recognised at all by the ordinary man. But the Jnani alone recognises it and perceives it clearly sometimes before a perception. From the first stage to the second is only a subjective change to 'I am' without losing its identity. This is called Sphurana. It has no object, but it has become self-luminous. That is all. When the 'I-Principle' comes to the third stage of perception, it becomes manifested as jiva. (...) The 'I-Principle' is pure and attributeless and is added on to the attribute every time. In other words the unmanifested 'I-Principle' first prepares itself to manifest by adopting the subjective change as 'I know I am', then takes on the attribute and becomes clearly manifested." Notes on Spiritual Discourses of Sree Atmananda (of Trivandrum) 1950-1959. Taken by Nitya Tripta. Trivandrum: Reddiar Press, 1963; p. 153 (AW nr. 410).

¹⁹ Atmananda Tattwa Samhita. Austin, TX: Advaita Publishers, 1991, p. 157.

²⁰ Idem (*Tattwa*), p. 15 and 17. These are sentences which form the close of a beautiful passage on the cause of diversity. Initial capitals are inserted on the basis of the quote of note 18.

²¹ Atma-Darshan, chapter 12; p 20.

interpretable term 'the Self' (Atman).22 The term Shuddha Sattva perhaps indicates best the difference between the top and the bottom. It means 'pure, unmixed Beingness quality'. As previously described in Part Two of 'I is a Door', sattva is the beingness quality. It is one of the three qualities (gunas) that is, sattva, rajas (restlessness) and tamas (sloth) which, merged with each other, bear all manifestation. Likewise, pill's entirety consists of the merger of all these three qualities. Shuddha means 'pure, unmixed'. Nisargadatta explains: "Pure sattva is perfect freedom from sloth and restlessness. Sattva is pure and strong always. It is like the sun. It may seem obscured by clouds and dust, but only from the point of view of the perceiver."23 This Shuddha Sattva is the healing element in the pill, the actual medicine that gives freedom. It may be called healing because it is prepared to sacrifice itself in the same way as soap is diminished when used to cleanse a cloth. It is true it is still one of the gunas, and is, therefore, called Sa-guna (filled with qualities); however, in its pureness it no longer holds on to something, and in this way it ultimately turns out to be Nir-guna — 'That' which is without quality, and precedes Experience. In the famous Advaita scripture Viveka Chudamani it says: "Tamas is overcome by rajas and sattva. Rajas is overcome by sattva. Sattva dissolves of its own accord when pure (shuddha)."24

Ramana Maharshi, who once translated this text, repeatedly has spoken about shuddha sattva and about the purification (*shuddhi*) of the mind (*manas*).²⁵ For instance he said, "Of these three [gunas] the

rajas and tamas aspects cling to and identify with the body. The remaining one, which is pure sattva, is alone the natural characteristic of the mind, and this stands clinging to the reality. However, in the pure sattvic state, the 'I'-thought is no longer really a thought, it is the Heart itself ... The state in which the pure sattva mind shines clinging to the Self is called *aham sphurana* [that is, I-I]."²⁶

Unmixed sattva, pure Beingness quality, is a reflection of Absolute Reality or Absolute Awareness. It is a totally clear mirror: the beingness quality which, as a mirror of Absolute Awareness is itself, the 'knowing quality'. As Nisargadatta's linguistic usage sometimes tends to emphasize that consciousness only exists thanks to the body (which he often plainly indicated as a product of the body), the confusion may sometimes arise that consciousness is actually only something chemical or biological. Of course that is not true. In the next quotation something entirely different is stressed, and as far as I am concerned touches the core: "The moon dancing on the water is seen in the water, but it is caused by the moon in the sky and not by the water."27 In other words: the Light dancing in the body is experienced in the body (as consciousness), however, this is caused by the Light and not by the body. Should this not be the case, freedom would not be an inherent fact, but a superimposed one which is dependent on conditional factors such as prarabdha (karma to be worked out in this lifetime).

Therefore, consciousness exists thanks to the Light, Absolute Awareness. Consciousness is *Its* reflection. It is important to notice that such a reflection of the Absolute Light can only exist with a physical body and mind, which as a mirror makes it possible. It is Light itself, but in the experiential sense of the word. If you look *within* consciousness to see what enables consciousness to be, you will notice

²² By using the term *Atman* for the pill it is possible to emphasize that this is the watershed (which can be ambiguous), that is, the transition from *Parama-atman* to *jiva-atman*. So the three levels are: 1. *Parama-atman*; 2. *Atman*; 3. *jiva-atman*. See also *Consciousness*, p. 102. *Atman* is the general term with which you can go both directions. It is true and untrue at the same time. Actually this classification is according to Nisargadatta; Ramana did use the word 'Self' or 'Atman' generally to denote the Ultimate.

²³ *I am That*, p. 14.

²⁴ Viveka Chudamani, verse 279; see also verses 176 and 362. The Crest Jewel of Wisdom (Viveka-Cudamani). Translated by Anthony J. Alston; London: Shanti Sadan, 1997, p. 167. Italics mine, PhR.

²⁵ See Ramana's translation in *Collected Works*, Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 7th ed., 2001, p. 238; see also *Talks*, Talk 73.

²⁶ 'Sri Bhagavan's Letter to Ganapati Muni', *The Mountain Path*, 1982, p. 95-101; quoted by David Godman in the article mentioned before, *The Mountain Path*, June 1991, p. 82. By "the Heart itself" Ramana did not mean sattva is already the Ultimate; for instance in Talk 497 he says "Even the sattva light is only reflected light."

²⁷ I am That, p. 199.

that it is the Light which facilitates it, the bestowing, knowing source of everything. It is not 'a' light, an observable source from which a radiance can be noticed,²⁸ but incomprehensible, untraceable Light. It is 'That' which makes everything else possible, and imparts reality to our present consciousness.

It is true this 'consciousness' in the way Nisargadatta uses it, is just as unreal in the ultimate sense as mind. However, by abiding and resting in this in-between level, you can gradually recognize what already *is* always real within this consciousness: the knowing element, the shuddha sattva element. In this way you can also recognize that *this* is the liberating element, because the knowing element is not attached to anything. As the contemporary Dzogchen-teacher Tsoknyi Rinpoche says, "The knowing quality itself remains undistracted." In other words, attention can be distracted, but the knowing quality enabling attention can not.

'Distraction of attention' means that you are being withdrawn from Experience Itself to fascinating experiences, which for their part divert and drag you into next riveting subject or matter. This is what the bottom part of the pill in the picture illustrates. This bottom part functions as the cause of multiplicity (the bubbles underneath the pill), hence the name 'causal body' for it. As we discovered in Part Two of 'I is a Door', simplicity or singularity is very hard to endure. Experience Itself, without *something* to be experienced, is hard to sustain. The thirst for experiencing *something* is inbuilt from birth. And when you experience something, you soon want more of it or, if it is negative, on the contrary, less. It seems there is always something more pleasant or beautiful to be experienced than what is actually occurring. This incessant thirst retains an element of seduction, which tempts us.

Seduction may sound moralistic, however, it is a term that covers this phenomenon very well. In the words of Nisargadatta: "If you get

involved with the flow of Maya there will be misery (You understand what is the flow? All that Maya, the activities). You try to derive pleasure from the activities; this is the *product* of beingness. Be still in your beingness."30 In fact seduction amounts to the suggestion that you should have to go somewhere; that you should be different, better, further, more free. The bottom part of the pill expresses 'go to' instead of 'abiding'. 'Fascination' is a good description for this as well. This word means enchantment, dazzling; in fascination you are in fact captivated, tied up.³¹ Because objectless-abiding is hard to sustain, we would rather have ourselves coupled to an object, which gives us something to hold. We are fascinated by our own creative power: our mind is a master in creating and we are fascinated by its products; all of its stories. In fascination lies the seduction. Being fascinated means non-understanding — we are being continually lured away from Understanding, the Understanding that we are and always have been free — the freedom of omnipresent Light.

In the Advaita tradition this non-understanding or ignorance (*a-jnana*) is also referred to as the 'causal body' we just mentioned. It is the 'causing' element in the Self. It is the very beginning of a series; it is something that comprises a sequel. The term causal shows that it is the cause of *something else*: it does not abide in what it is itself. Just as the upper part of the pill can be briefly called 'shuddha sattva', the bottom part can be referred to as the 'causal body'. Nisargadatta says, "There is something that may be called the memory body, or causal body, a record of all that was thought, wanted and done. It is like a cloud of images held together."³²

This holding together of images by means of the tendencies (*samskaras* or *vasanas*) which it contains, triggers the suggestion that you are a person, an individual or 'soul'. This suggestion leads us to identify ourself with this one individual, who seems to be separated

²⁸ See Ramana's statement: "The sunlight is *jada* (insentient)", in *Talks*, Talk 73., Talk 420.

²⁹ Tsoknyi Rinpoche, Drubwang, *Carefree Dignity*. Discourses on Training in the Nature of Mind. Boudhanath: Rangjung Yeshe, 1998, p. 65.

³⁰ Prior to Consciousness, p. 21, and Ultimate, p. 10. Italics mine, PhR.

³¹ The word fascination is derived from the Latin *fascinare*, which means binding together. Related to this is the *fasces*, a bundle of rods, with an ax bound in along with them; the symbol of the fascist party in Italy.

³² *I am That*, p. 12.

from other individuals (as indicated by the bubbles underneath the pill). In the Advaita tradition the 'germ of *jiva*-ness', the primordial suggestion that you are an individual or soul (*jiva*), is regarded synonymous with the causal body of the Self. Ramana Maharshi too, showed that the germ of the *jiva* in fact is similar to the most refined of the three bodies, that catalyst which has the power to suggest or create: "Man has three bodies, the gross one made of the five elements; the *sukshma* or subtle one made of *manas* and *prana*; and the *jiva*."³³

Jiva is a term which is often used ambiguously. This also occurs in the traditional Advaita scriptures: it is applied both for an 'eternal (i.e. real) soul' which by mistake does not see its own true nature, as well as for the mistake itself, that is, the assumption of being someone separate, the individual (jiva) divided from others. We would do well, as far as I am concerned, to limit ourselves in our linguistic usage to the latter. Ramana frankly said: "People think that they are jivas. ... In fact there are no jivas." Consequently 'jiva' or 'individual' is just a temporary way of speaking in order to indicate the restricted form of a body and mind in which you exist, and which is comparable to a house. You are not that.

The aid rendered by the in-between level of 'I am' as a door or medicine, lies in discovering here the root of the mistake, instead of searching for this root within the karmic past of the jiva. Ramana said, "The more you rectify your karma, the more it accumulates. Find the *root* of karma and cut it off." The root of karma is here, *within* the present Experience, *within* the pill. We can continue our past, that is to say our karma, or we now can recognize and acknowledge freedom. This is the point where we can go in either direction — the responsibility is up to us to see what we really want. Abiding here, in Experience Itself, 'consciousness', we can recognize that we won't have to be underneath



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³³ Day by Day with Bhagavan, by Devaraja Mudaliar. Combined Volume. Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1968, p. 6.

³⁴ *Talks*, Talk 313.

³⁵ Talks, Talk 488.

the central groove of the pill in the illustration at all, meaning that we are not fated to continue our past. It is vital to notice that this root, this cause or seed actually does not exist. Searching for the beginning already is *within* the sense of fascination — fascination and identification have then begun already. Nisargadatta said about this: "People think I am the cause, but I am not the cause, I am the support. ... The world is there spontaneously without any seed; creation is seedless, but the world is full of seeds and procreation is going on daily." 36

Is it possible to say something truthful about what multiplicity is? The next statement is from one of the Upanishads, which I consider a beautiful answer to this quandary: "Taking birth, You have Your faces everywhere". Nisargadatta also commented on the same theme, "The one witness reflects itself in the countless bodies as 'I am' [as 'Experience']. As long as the bodies, however subtle, last, the 'I am' appears as many. Beyond the body there is only the One."³⁷

'I am' is one. It is one Object. We may also express it differently, namely, that it is the *last* object. This last object is the same in everybody. Abiding here, you are already free from fascination. To this one Object point the well-known words: "The Guru, God, your own knowledge ['I am'] – these three are one." All three are terms for the last Object, within and outside: 'This'. You would do well in confining yourself to This, whatever 'This' may be. In other words, stay with present Object — present 'consciousness' or Experience.

As long as an object appears, there is a Witness of it — You are That.

You yourself are not an object. You are constantly looking from Yourself already now, that is, from Light, your own Luminosity. The 'Witness' is not something that exists *as such* — it does exist *only* when an object appears. The One turns Itself into a second one. That

is 'I am', Experience. But as soon as the Witness is recognized *in* Experience, knowledge (*jnana*) becomes Understanding (*Jnana*, or *Vijnana*). Here the medicine dissolves, as it has been digested. There is no second person or object. 'This' turns out to be the same as 'That', the undivided Reality. The so-called pill is just a temporary mirror. It only reflects the Light.

'I' cannot be seen. Thanks to the mirror you see a *reflection* of 'I'. That is the aid, so that you can recognize.

'I' is already and always Light Itself. The Constant Source of all seeing. Via the mirror of 'I am' I can see that I am not this reflection — the reflected image of 'I am'. I am always the luminous seeing as such, Light Itself.

(Translated from Dutch by Johan Veldman)

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<u>Talks</u>: Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi. Three volumes in one. Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1955.

Iam That: *Iam That*. Vert.: Maurice Frydman. Bombay: Chetana; 1973; ed. of 1985. *Seeds*: *Seeds of Consciousness*. New York: Grove Press, 1982.

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Consciousness: Consciousness and the Absolute. Durham, NC: Acorn Press, 1994.

<u>Nectar</u>: The Nectar of the Lord's Feet. Longmead, Shaftesbury (Dorset): Element Books, 1987. Present title: The Nectar of Immortality (Blue Dove Press).

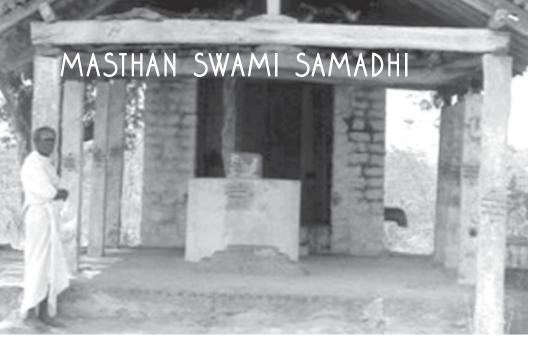
<u>Ultimate</u>: The Ultimate Medicine. San Diego, CA: Blue Dove Press, 1994.

Experience: The Experience of Nothingness. San Diego, CA: Blue Dove Press, 1996.

³⁶ *Prior*, p. 42 and 45.

³⁷ Shvetashvatara Upanishad IV.3. Translated by Swami Gambhirananda, *Svetasvatara Upanisad*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986, p. 143; and *I am That*, p. 157.

³⁸ Seeds, p. 42. "Ishvaro gurur-atma iti"; translated by Ramana in Talk 496 as "Isvara, Guru and the Self are synonymous."



Masthan Samadhi

Sri Ramanasramam is planning to renovate Masthan Swami's Samadhi in the coming months. The restoration plans include the Samadhi shrine, the meditation hall, the guest hall and kitchen. A *mantap* will be constructed in front of the Samadhi shrine. The Ashram also intends to put in a bore well, level the surrounding grounds and fence them, plant trees and landscape the area. At present, the Samadhi is situated in an open area and devotees may visit at any time they choose.

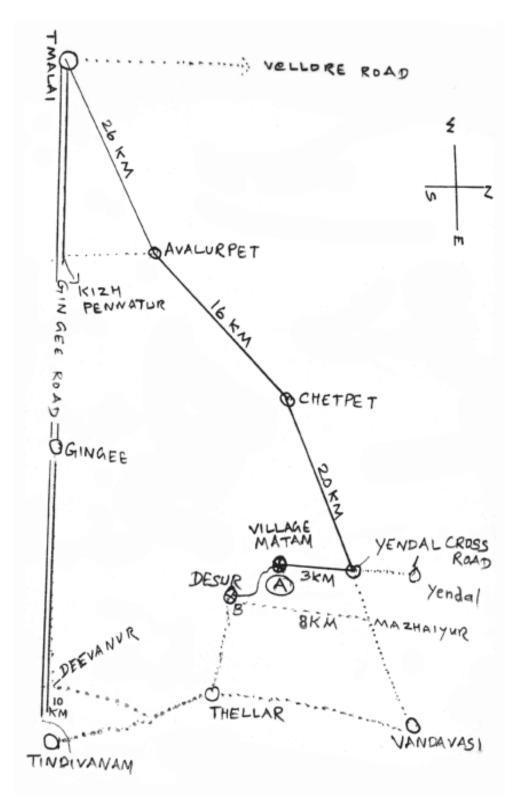
Matam Village

Masthan Swami's Samadhi is in this village. The caretakers who may be contacted are: i] Varada Goundar. Tel: 04183-247486; ii] Sundara Moorthy Teacher. Tel: 04183-247297.

Desur

The first Ramana Centre, Ramana Matalayam was established in this village. The centre was built by the efforts of Masthan Swami and Akilandamma aka Desuramma. Her samadhi is in this math. The caretakers are: i] Udayar Poosari and ii] Dr. Ravi at Vandavasi. Tel: 04183-227683

Anyone wishing to visit Ramana Matalayam may collect a duplicate key from Sri Ramanasramam (and inform Dr. Ravi of their intentions).



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Upadesa Tiruvahaval

Part Two

SRI MURUGANAR

The next section comes from Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham, volume 9, p. 306. Muruganar wrote these lines (which we have numbered 'insert 1-16') after the original poem had been published in Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai. He left a note in his papers that stated they should be included at this point in the poem. While the preceding section records an explanation of the teachings expounded in the first invocatory verse of Ulladu Narpadu, these new lines take up the subject matter of the second invocatory verse.

The verse itself says:

Those people who have a deep fear of death will, for their protection, take refuge at the holy feet of Lord Siva, he who is without both birth and death. In thus taking refuge [in Him] they suffered their own death. For them, in this deathless state, will the thought of death remain?

This text is translated by Robert Butler, T. V. Venkatasubramanian and David Godman. (Photo by Chris Fallon)

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Insert 1-16

'Only those whose minds are extremely shaken by the fear of death are fit to undertake the path of crossing [the ocean of *samsara*]. They are the ripe and competent persons.' Out of love you declared this to me, my Father.

Those who cling as their supreme refuge to the feet, girt with warrior's anklets, of the Lord who is beyond birth and death, who chastised even the god of death for the sake of his devotee [Markandeya], will, as the fruit of that clinging, be brought under his power. Their inner attachment, consisting of the ego, will be destroyed, along with all the other attachments which depend on the ego. The seed of the ego will not be able to sprout within them as before. They will become absorbed in the Heart, and will abide as the truth of their own Self. It is inconsistent for the thought of death to arise in those whose ego is dead. Thus did you declare. Praise be to you!

Thus, declaring 'That is the state of immortality,' you graciously imparted in words this ambrosial teaching to the soul of myself, your devotee. Praise be to you!

When Markandeya's father was childless, he prayed to Siva to give him a son. Siva appeared before him and offered him the choice of having either a dull-witted boy who would live a full span of life, or an intelligent, devoted son who would not survive past the age of sixteen. The father chose to have the intelligent, devoted son. When Markandeya was sixteen, Yama, the god of death, came to collect him and attempted to catch him by throwing a rope around him. The rope bound Markandeya to the lingam he was worshipping at the time. Siva, who took this to be a personal insult to his devotee, appeared and killed Yama by kicking him. However, Siva later relented and brought Yama back to life. In order to keep Markandeya alive, without allowing the terms of the original boon to lapse, Siva ordained that he would remain as a sixteen-year-old for the rest of his life.

The teachings that Muruganar recorded in insert 1-16 are very similar to an explanation of the second benedictory verse that Bhagavan gave to David McIver:

Bhagavan: The second stanza [the second invocatory verse of Ulladu Narpadu] is in praise of God with attributes. In the foregoing [the first benedictory verse] to be as [the] one Self is mentioned; in the present one, surrender to the Lord of all.

Furthermore, the second indicates (1) the fit reader (2) the subject matter (3) the relationship and (4) the fruit. The fit reader is the one who is competent for it. Competence consists in non-attachment to the world and desire to be liberated.

All know that they must die at some time or other; but they do not think deeply about the matter. All have a fear of death; such fear is momentary. Why fear death? Because of the I-am-the-body idea. All are fully aware of the death of the body and its cremation. That the body is lost in death is well known. Owing to the I-am-the-body notion, death is feared as being the loss of oneself. Birth and death pertain to the body only; but they are superimposed on the Self, giving rise to the delusion that birth and death relate to the Self.

In the effort to overcome birth and death man looks up to the Supreme Being to save him. Thus are born faith and devotion to the Lord. How to worship Him? The creature is powerless and the Creator is all-powerful. How to approach Him? To entrust oneself to His care is the only thing left for him; total surrender is the only way. Therefore he surrenders himself to God. Surrender consists in giving up oneself and one's possessions to the Lord of Mercy. Then what is left over for the man? Nothing — neither himself nor his possessions. The body, liable to be born and die, having been made over to the Lord, the man need no longer worry about it. Then birth and death cannot strike terror. The cause of fear was the body; it is no longer his; why should he fear now? Or where is the identity of the individual to be frightened?

Thus the Self is realised and bliss results. This then is the subject matter [of the verse]: freedom from misery and gain of happiness. This is the highest good to be gained. Surrender is synonymous with bliss itself. This is the relationship.

Fruit is to reflect on the subject matter and gain knowledge which is ever-present, here and now. The stanza ends with 'the immortal ones'.1

The remaining lines come from the original published version of 'Upadesa Tiruvahaval'.

99-108

Maya is only the mind persisting vigorously in the form of thoughts. The destruction of the mind is the attainment of *jnana*. Thus did you declare to me, mean and pitiable as I was, giving me comfort and clear understanding. Praise be to you!

You taught: 'To enquire what the mind is with the mind is the means to destroy the mind.' Praise be to you!

You declared: 'Instead of directly realising the Self that lies within the five bodily sheaths, to search to the very end of the many scriptures, which only give good advice, is pointless and a waste.' Praise be to you!

This is probably a reference to an upadesa Bhagavan gave in Who Am I?

Question: Is it any use reading books for those who long for release? Bhagavan: All the texts say that in order to attain release one should render the mind quiescent; therefore their conclusive teaching is that the mind should be rendered quiescent; once this has been understood there is no need for endless reading. In order to quieten the mind one has only to enquire within oneself what one's Self is; how could this search be done in books? One should know one's Self with one's own eye of wisdom. The Self is within the five sheaths; but books are outside them. Since the Self has to be enquired into by discarding the five sheaths, it is futile to search for it in books. There will come a time when one will have to forget all that one has learned.²

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109-114

'Bondage is merely the thought of the pairs of opposites,' you assured me, impressing it upon my mind. Praise be to you!

Father, you bade me, worthless as I was, to utter with a collected mind the words: 'Siva! Siva!' Praise be to you! [Adding], 'If you examine to whom those thoughts belong, bondage will cease.' Praise be to you!

Though Bhagavan rarely gave out mantras, when he did, he generally recommended 'Siva, Siva'. Muruganar himself was given this mantra by Bhagavan, as were several other devotees including Annamalai Swami, the brother of Rangan (who was one of Bhagavan's childhood friends) and an unknown harijan.

115-118

You declared: 'If you investigate who is he that is in bondage, it will be found that there is no one in bondage. Thus bondage is not, and consequently, liberation also is not.' Praise be to you!

The source of these four lines is probably Ulladu Narpadu verse 39:

Only so long as one thinks like a madman, 'I am a bound one,' will thoughts of bondage and liberation remain. But, seeing oneself, 'Who is this bound one?' the eternally liberated and ever-attained Self alone will exist. When the thought of bondage cannot remain, can the thought of liberation still remain?

119-122

'Realisation of the ever-present Self is the greatest attainment [siddhi],' you clearly told me. Praise be to you!

'That is the true attainment, that is liberation and that is *jnana*,' you declared. Praise be to you!

This is a summary of some of the ideas that are contained in Ulladu Narpadu, verse 35. It should be remembered that the teachings contained in Ulladu Narpadu were originally given to Muruganar, generally in response to specific topics suggested by Muruganar himself.

¹ Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk 567.

² Who am I? Question and answer 23.

To know and to be – with the mind subsided – the reality which is ever-attained, is the [true] siddhi. All other siddhis are siddhis that are acquired in a dream; when one wakes up from sleep, will they be real? Will they who, by abiding in the true state, are rid of the false [state], be deluded [by siddhis]? Know and be you [the reality].³

123-134

You declared: 'As there is nothing whatsoever to cause fear [in the Self], it is foolish to get frightened.' Praise be to you!

'Those who have known this state will subside [in the Self], and will not become embroiled in and perplexed by this impermanent world.' Thus did you explain the state of *jivan mukti* indirectly. Praise be to you!

Ignorant as I was, this did I clearly grasp. Praise be to you!

You declared: 'When anger arises, vent your anger upon the anger itself, for it is your enemy, and destroy it.' Praise be to you!

'Do not associate [with others] simply because they praise you. Rather, value their abuse.' Praise be to you!

You declared: 'Value the very ones who vilify you as though they were your dearest friends.' Praise be to you!

Bhagavan expounded on some of these ideas when he spoke to a visitor:

Yesterday a newly arrived Andhra youth told Bhagavan about the vagaries of his senses to which Bhagavan said, 'All that is due to the mind. Set it right.' 'That is all right, Swami, but however much I try to reduce this anger, it comes on again and again. What shall I do?' said the poor boy.

'Oh, is that so? Then get angry with that anger; it will be all right,' said Bhagavan. All the people in the hall burst out laughing. A person who gets angry with everything in the world, if only he introspects and enquires why he does not get angry with his anger itself, will he really not overcome all anger?

Two or three years back a devotee who could freely approach Bhagavan came and told him five or six times that somebody had been abusing him. Bhagavan listened but said nothing. As there was no response from Bhagavan in spite of repeated and varied complaints and in a number of ways, this devotee could not contain himself any longer and so said, 'When I am abused so much unnecessarily, I also get angry. However much I try to restrain my anger, I am not able to do so. What shall I do?'

Bhagavan laughingly said, 'What should you do? You too join him and abuse yourself; then it will be all right.' All laughed.

That devotee, unable to understand anything, said, 'That is very good! Should I abuse myself?'

'Yes indeed! What they are abusing is your body, isn't it? What greater enemy is there than this body which is the abode of anger and similar feelings? It is necessary that we ourselves should hate it. Instead of that, when we are unguarded, if anybody abuses us, we should know that they are waking us up. We should realise at least then and join them in abusing the body, and crying it down. What is the use of counter-abuse? Those who abuse us that way should be looked upon as our friends. It is good for us to be among such people. If you are among people who praise you, you get deceived,' said Bhagavan.⁴

135-136

'The rights you have, others also have; the rights others do not have, you do not have either.'

Muruganar also recorded this particular teaching in Guru Vachaka Kovai, verse 817:

Only if some rights are granted to others do they exist for you as well. But if those who deny a few rights to others enjoy these privileges themselves, then only moral corruption will result.

³ Ulladu Narpadu Kalivenba, tr. Sadhu Om. The Mountain Path, 1981, p. 222.

⁴ Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, 26th January 1946.

137-140

Praise be to you, Lord of the Vedas, who declared on many occasions: 'The Heart where the "I" thought does not arise is the Self, the undivided supreme Reality', thus clearly revealing the nature of the middle state.

'The middle state' is the one experienced between the waking and sleeping states. This is Bhagavan's description of it:

Bhagavan: The ego in its purity is experienced in the intervals between two states or between two thoughts. The ego is like the worm which leaves hold only after it catches another. Its true nature is known when it is out of contact with objects or thoughts. You should realise the interval as the abiding unchanging reality, your true being, through the conviction gained by the study of the three states, jagrat [waking], swapna [dreaming] and sushupti [sleep].⁵

141-154

'Those who have seen their own Self do not see others; those who see others do not see their own Self.' Thus did you fully explain the glorious state of *mauna*, Glorious One, you who wear a warrior's noble anklets!

'Banish your harmful anxieties by entrusting everything to the all-powerful Lord,' you declared. Praise be to you!

You declared: 'Those who understand the true meaning of the scriptures will describe the world of the senses and the beings within it as real, when viewed from the standpoint of cause, and unreal, when viewed from the standpoint of effect. There is really no contradiction here. Both these views, made by those of mature understanding, are consistent with each other.' Praise be to you!

You declared: 'As the mind [in following either of the views] does not become externalised, but abides as the Self, the end result is also the same.' Praise be to you!

⁵ Maharshi's Gospel, pp. 25-26.

'Cause' in these lines refers to the unmanifest Self and 'effect' the world of names and forms. The world is real when it is known to be Self alone, and unreal when it is merely perceived as separate objects. Muruganar made the same point in verses nineteen and twenty of Guru Vachaka Kovai:

19 Since the cause itself [reality] appears as the effect [the world], and because consciousness – the cause of this vast world described by the sastras as being merely names and forms – is a truth as obvious as the nelli fruit on one's palm, it is proper to term this great world 'real'.6

20 The worlds that are described as being either three or fourteen are real when seen from the point of view of the primal cause [Brahman] because they have unceasing existence as their [real] nature. However, when attention is paid only to the names and forms, the effect, even the undecaying cause, the plenitude, will appear to be non-existent, a void.

155-164

Demonstrating that freedom from desire is the virtuous path, you drove away all my evil desires. Praise be to you!

At the mere thought of you, you entered my Heart, becoming nectar for my mind. Praise be to you!

You revealed that the ambrosial essence of all learning is to know the state of the Self, the enduring substratum of all the worlds that appear as an illusion before the mass of beings, and the nature of whose phenomena cannot be ascertained even by the greatest minds. Praise be to you!

⁶ 'Nelli' is the Tamil name for a small green fruit that physically resembles a gooseberry. It is known elsewhere in India as an 'amla'. In many parts of India people say, 'It's as obvious as the amla on one's palm' when they mean that something is clear, easily perceived and irrefutable. In *Atma Vidya* Bhagavan wrote: 'Even for the most infirm, so real is the Self that compared with it the amla in one's hand appears a mere illusion.' (*Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 132)

165-176

Glory to the teacher who confers the true attainment of *jnana* by destroying the infatuation that consists in the forgetting [of the Self]!

Glory to you who revealed clearly that true attainment as my own Self, the indivisible light!

Glory to you who appeared first as God, then as Guru in the middle stage, and who finally dwelt as my Self!

Glory to you who dwelt as my own Self, the ocean of bliss that is worthy of my devotion!

Glory to you, the teacher who, in an excess of love, took pity on me, worthless as I was, and explained to me in words the nature of the true reality, a teaching which you conveyed to the mature ones through the lofty state of *mauna*!

177-186

But did it end with this verbal teaching? No, you also bestowed your grace upon me, enabling me to abide in that state. Praise be to you!

You dragged me into the Heart, so that I expired in the Siva-ocean of true *jnana*. Praise be to you!

As I lie dying in that ocean, what fitting recompense can I offer to your holy feet? Praise be to you!

May you gladly accept as that recompense the merging of my unruly mind with your ankleted feet. Praise be to you!

May your golden feet flourish! May your golden grace flourish! Venkata, may your golden fame flourish!

HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

It is Bhagavan's Grace

HEMALATHA RAJAN

I was only 14 years old, one of the lucky ones to come to Bhagavan, prostrate before him and be blessed at such a young age.

Soon after my birth at Chennai, I had left with my mother and various siblings for Kolkata and spent 14 years there, my father being placed in a senior position in a heavy machinery corporation. We were there in the uneasy mid 1940's, with Hindu-Muslim rioting, Mahatma Gandhi's Freedom struggle, overlaid with bombing due to the Second World War which filled the air. The atmosphere was chaotic. At last, we were forced to leave the city and return for a time to Chennai where my grandparents still lived. From there we were invited to Madurai where my only maternal uncle was serving in the Southern Railway as Divisional Traffic Superintendent at Madurai. However, the day after we arrived at his house, official duty forced him to leave the next day on inspection to Villupuram. We accompanied him in

his saloon car and arrived at our destination in the morning. At Villupuram, he was told that his inspection would involve a full day. Thus, it was decided to send my mother, aunt, and six of us children to nearby Tiruvannamalai by car! We reached the ashram by 10:30 a.m. and entered in file the room where Bhagavan was reclining on the divan and fanning Himself. We sat in front of Him, and He looked at each of us in turn and smiled graciously. As the room was otherwise fully occupied with silent, seated devotees, we youngsters were also directed to remain likewise and awed by circumstances, felt glad to do so. Nevertheless, this discipline could not last long. My young brother was the first to get up and walked up and down in front of Bhagavan thus causing a disturbance to the serene atmosphere. We realized we should get up, offer our pranams and move out of the room. Seeing us all involved in this forced movement, Bhagavan waved out to us not to leave so soon, except when necessary and to have our noon meals. We nodded in compliance and waited until the lunchtime bell rang beckoning all inmates. After joining the ashramites in the dining hall, we children were bid to sit in one row close to where Bhagavan was to come and be seated to partake in the meals served on fresh plantain leaves. Bhagavan arrived in His calm majestic manner and sat down and it was my blessed fortune to be seated first to His left side. His divine glance of grace fell upon me. I looked up at Him and sat there filled with His look of abundant love.

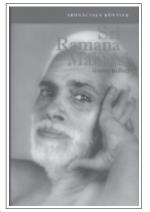
Now, I must speak truly of the spiritual awakening that took place within me and a daily longing for the search of Knowledge and self-enquiry that followed this 'chance' enquiry. Many years passed, and it was only long after Bhagavan attained mahasamadhi. In the year 1983, I was able to come once again to Tiruvannamalai and be in the presence of Bhagavan. Since that year, His ever-flowing divine grace has led me to spend days in His glorious presence regularly without a break, a blessed contrast to the somewhat fractured influence of my early life. Bhagavan's promise to protect and bless His sincere seekers is seen and felt by me until this day, and I regard this unbroken contact as a miracle indeed.

I must add a few more lines to express my joy of another unexpected incident, which happened in 1991. At that time, my husband retired

from Railway Service and we came to the ashram for a few days retreat. Prior to leaving, we met the then President, Swami Ramanananda Saraswathi who enquired of our welfare. We informed him we had bought a small flat at Visakhapatnam and had come to pray and receive Bhagavan's blessings to perform grahapravesam puja before taking up residence. He was glad to hear of this and at once asked us to go over to his room where he presented us with a large photograph of Bhagavan. On receiving this special gift of Bhagavan's to us for the upcoming occasion, I could not control my happiness with tears rolling down my cheeks. Bhagavan's was the first gift we received before we could speak of the ceremony function to anyone else known to us. I cried out to within myself, "Bhagavan, it is forever true you are with us".

During the puja ceremony later, we placed the photograph where all our family members could prostrate before it and thus receive His Blessings. I fixed it up so that everyone who entered our house look up to Him and know he is present. Ever since then, it has become a daily habit for me to speak to Him of my inner feelings and implore His Blessings for firm strength in the progress of my sadhana.

The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi



The Hungarian Ramana Group has translated and published for the first time a beautifully presented edition of Bhagavan's works in Hungarian.

The Hungarian group was started four years ago and meets regularly at Budapest each month on the nearest Saturday to the full moon. The meetings take place at approximately the same time as Tamil Parayana at Sri Ramanasramam. There are some twenty regular members and guests are welcome. The group may be contacted at alder@hebe.hu There is a plan to create a website in the near future.

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The Nature of Our Mind

MICHAEL JAMES

The following is an abridged extract from Happiness and the Art of Being, a new book by Michael James, which is soon to be published. Though this book is subtitled A layman's introduction to the philosophy and practice of the spiritual teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, it is in fact an in-depth exploration of his teachings, but is written in a clear and simple manner which can be easily understood even by people who have no previous acquaintance with any form of spiritual philosophy. For a free downloadable PDF version of this book, readers may refer to Michael's new website, www.HappinessOfBeing.com

What we call our 'mind' is just a limited and distorted form of our fundamental consciousness 'I am' — a spurious form of consciousness that identifies itself with a particular body, and that appears to exist only in the states of waking and dream, and disappears in deep sleep. Since this mind is the primary obstacle that stands in the way of our knowing ourself as we really are, let us now examine it more closely. What is the nature of this distorted form of consciousness that we call our 'mind'?

2007

Our mind as we now know it is just a bundle of thoughts — thoughts, that is, in the very broadest sense of the term, namely anything that our mind forms and experiences within itself, such as any perception, conception, idea, belief, feeling, emotion, desire, fear or suchlike. All thoughts are just images that our mind forms within itself by its power of imagination. Except our fundamental consciousness 'I am', everything that our mind knows or experiences is only a thought. Even our perceptions are thoughts or mental images that our mind forms within itself by its wonderful power of imagination. Whether perceptions in the waking state are formed only by our mind's power of imagination without any external stimuli, as in dream, or whether they are formed by our mind's power of imagination in response to actual external stimuli, is something we can know for certain only when we discover the ultimate truth about our mind.

Because the fact that all our perceptions are only thoughts is so important, let us examine it more closely, using the example of sight. According to the 'scientific' explanation of the process of seeing, light from the outside world enters our eyeballs and stimulates electrochemical reactions in our retinas. These then stimulate a chain of further electrochemical reactions along our optic nerves, and these in turn reach our brain causing more electrochemical activity to take place there. Thus far the process is clear-cut and simple to understand. But then something mysterious happens. Our mind, which is a form of consciousness that interfaces with our brain, then somehow interprets all this electrochemical activity by forming images within itself that we believe to correspond to the shape, colour and size of external objects, and to their relative distance from our body. But all we actually know when we see something is the image that our mind has formed within itself.

Our belief that such images correspond to actual external objects, and all our scientific explanations of the process by which light from those objects stimulates our mind to form such images, are also only images or thoughts that our mind has formed within itself. The same applies to all the images of sound, smell, taste and touch that our mind forms within itself, supposedly in response to external stimuli.

Therefore all that we know of the external world is actually only the images or thoughts that our mind is constantly forming within itself. Do we not have to accept, therefore, that the world that we think we perceive outside ourself may be nothing other than thoughts that our mind has formed within itself, just as the worlds that we see in our dreams are? Even if we are not ready to accept the fact that the world may actually be nothing but our own thoughts, must we not at least accept the fact that the world as we know it, and as we ever can know it, is indeed nothing but thoughts?

Of all the thoughts that are formed in our mind, the first is the thought 'I'. Our mind first forms itself as the thought 'I', and only after that does it form other thoughts. Without an 'I' to think them, no other thoughts could be formed. All the other thoughts formed in our mind are constantly coming and going, but the thought 'I' persists so long as our mind itself persists. Thus the thought 'I' is the root of all other thoughts, and is the one essential thought without which there would be no such thing as 'mind'.

Therefore our mind consists of two distinct elements, namely the knowing subject, the root thought 'I', and the known objects, all the other thoughts that are formed and experienced by 'I'. However, though it consists of these two distinct elements, the one fundamental and essential element of our mind is the root thought 'I'. Hence, though we use the term 'mind' as a collective term for both the thinker and its thoughts, the mind is in essence just the thinker, the root thought 'I' that thinks all other thoughts. This simple but important truth is expressed succinctly by Sri Ramana in *Upadesa Undiyar*, verse 18:

[Our] mind is only [a multitude of] thoughts. Of all [the countless thoughts that are formed in our mind], the thought 'I' alone is the root [base, foundation or origin]. [Therefore] what is called 'mind' is [in essence just this root thought] 'I'.

Just as on analysis our mind can thus be resolved into being in essence only this fundamental thought 'I', so on further analysis this fundamental thought 'I' can be resolved into being in essence only consciousness. Because it knows other thoughts, this thought 'I' is a

form of consciousness, but because it is formed only by feeling 'I am such-and-such a person', and because it loses its separate form in sleep, when it ceases to feel thus, it is not our permanent and real form of consciousness, 'I am'. Because it can rise only by identifying a physical body as 'I', as it does in both waking and dream, it is a mixed and contaminated form of consciousness, a consciousness that confuses itself with a body, feeling mistakenly 'I am this body, an individual person called so-and-so'.

What we mean when we say 'I am such-and-such a person' is that we are an individual consciousness that identifies itself with an adjunct, a particular body. This identification of our consciousness with a particular body is what defines us as a person or individual. Our individuality is thus nothing other than this adjunct-bound consciousness that feels 'I am this body'. By mistaking itself to be a particular body, this consciousness confines itself within the limits of that body, and feels itself to be separate from all that it perceives outside that body. This seemingly separate individual consciousness 'I am this body' is what we call by various names such as the mind, the ego, the psyche or the soul.

In religious terminology, our limited individual consciousness 'I am this body' is what is called our 'soul', whereas our unlimited fundamental consciousness 'I am' is what is called our 'spirit', our 'heart' or the 'core of our soul'. The popular belief that our whole self is a compound of these three elements, our body, our soul and our spirit, is rooted in our wrong identification of ourself with a particular body. Though we know ourself to be one, because of our mistaken identification of ourself with a body, we wrongly imagine ourself to be all these three different things. This notion of ours is logically absurd, because since we are one, how can three quite different things be ourself?

Every day in sleep both our body and our soul (our mind) disappear, yet we continue to exist, and to know that we exist. Therefore, since we remain in sleep without either our body or our soul, neither of these two elements can be our real self. In truth, therefore, these three elements constitute only our false individual self, which is a mere illusion. Our real self consists of only one

element, the fundamental and essential element that we call our 'spirit', which is our single non-dual consciousness of being, 'I am'.

Because this non-dual spirit is entirely distinct from our body and our individual soul, it is not limited in any way, nor is it divided. Therefore the spirit that exists as the heart or core of each individual soul is essentially the same single, undivided, non-dual and infinite consciousness of being. What each one of us experiences as our essential consciousness of being, 'I am', is the same non-dual real consciousness that exists in every other living being.

Because our mind or soul is a form of consciousness that has limited itself within the confines of a particular body, and because it sees many other bodies, each of which seems to have a consciousness of its own, in the outlook of our mind there appear to be many other minds. However, because the fundamental consciousness 'I am', which is experienced by each of us as the essential core of our being, always exists as it is, without limiting itself in any way by identifying itself with an adjunct, there is in reality only one consciousness 'I am', even though due to our distorted individualised consciousness we think that the 'I am' in each person is different to that in every other person. The mind or separate individual 'I' that we see in each person is just a different reflection of the one original 'I' that exists in the innermost depth of each one of us, just as the bright light that we see in each fragment of a broken mirror lying on the ground is just a different reflection of the one sun shining brightly in the sky.

Though it is formed only by imagining itself to be a particular body, the mind of each one of us nevertheless contains within itself the light of our original consciousness 'I am'. Just as each reflected sun lying on the ground could not be formed without borrowing both the light of the sun and the limited form of a fragment of mirror, so without borrowing the light of consciousness from its original source, 'I am', and without at the same time borrowing all the limitations of a physical body, our mind could not rise into existence. Thus our mind is a mixture composed of two contrary and discordant elements, the essential element of consciousness and the superimposed element of physical limitations.

2007 ASHRAM CALENDAR

Sri Bhagavan's 127th Jayanti	Sunday	4th Jan
Sri Vidya Havan	Friday	26th Jan
Chinna Swamigal Aradhana	Thursday	1st Feb
Maha Sivaratri	Friday	16th Feb
Telugu New Year Day	Monday	19th Mar
Sri Rama Navami	Tuesday	27th Mar
Tamil New Year Day	Saturday	14th Apr
Bhagavan's Aradhana	Monday	14th May
Maha Puja (Mother's Aradhana)	Saturday	9th June
Guru Poornima (Vyasa Puja)	Sunday	29th July
Sri Bhagavan's Advent Day	Saturday	1st Sept
Krishna Jayanti (Gokulashtami)	Tuesday	4th Sept
Navaratri Festival commences	Friday	12th Oct
Saraswati Puja	Saturday	20th Oct
Vijayadasami	Sunday	21st Oct
Deepavali	Friday	9th Nov
Karthigai Festival commences	Thursday	15th Nov
Karthigai Deepam	Saturday	24th Nov
Sri Bhagavan's 128th Jayanti	Tuesday	25th Dec

Internet Resources

Part Five

DENNIS WAITE

C. Buying Books

The Internet is an excellent resource for buying books on Advaita simply because bookstores that stock these books are so difficult to find unless you live in India. You will be fortunate indeed if you happen to have such a store within easy access of your home. Buying off the Internet using a credit card is very easy and, providing that the web site has a secure facility, also very safe.

Large organisations such as Amazon are excellent in that they have huge stocks and a very efficient service. Prices are also often lower than you will find elsewhere.

Because Advaita is such a specialist subject however, and many books are printed without ISBN by small Ashrams, you will not always find the books listed. In this case it is often necessary to buy direct from the publisher. Buying books from India is also very easy. The quality of the printing and binding is not always as good as you would expect

from western publishers and books usually have a unique smell (which you will grow to love!). Delivery often takes a long time too (over a month is not unusual). The very big point in favour of this route, however, assuming there is any choice, is that books are usually extremely cheap compared to buying in the west. As an example, the Bhagavad Gita with Sankara's commentary translated by Swami Gambhirananda was \$20 from Amazon.com in Aug. 2005 and Rs110 = \$2.51 from Motilal Banarsidass.

1. In the UK

Watkins Books is the bookshop that I visit whenever I travel to London in the UK. It has a large section downstairs devoted to Advaita, both traditional and modern. It is in the process of building an online purchase facility and this may well be available by the time that you read this. http://www.watkinsbooks.com/

Non-Duality Books is a mail-order outlet now specialising in books on neo-Advaita. http://www.non-dualitybooks.com/

Teeran's Booksellers at the Bhavan is also based in London (West Kensington). They also sell CDs, videos, musical instruments, statues and art but specifically stock books from India. It is associated with the teachings of the Sri Lanka sage Yoga Swami 1872-1964. http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/teerans

Motilal Books (UK) is the UK branch of the Indian Publisher and Booksellers Motilal Banarsidass. The site supports on-line ordering, prices are quoted in £ sterling and books presumably shipped from the UK. http://www.mlbduk.com/index.asp

2. In the US

The **Awake Bookstore** in Washington has a wide range of books on Advaita and other non-dual teachings that may be ordered securely world-wide. http://www.awakebookstore.com/

Blue Dove is a non-profit making bookstore based in San Diego, California. Containing a number of good books on Advaita and related topics, it also provides an excellent world-wide delivery service. It is also able to supply copies of Atmananda Krishna Menon books "Atma

Darshan" and "Atma Nirvritti", both difficult to obtain. http://www.bluedove.org/

Chimaya Publications are able to supply all the books by Swami Chinamyananda that are currently in print. http://www.chinmayapublications.org/

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam has already been mentioned in the Organizations section but must have another mention here since it is the principal (sometimes only) source for the excellent books by Swami Dayananda. http://www.arshavidya.org/

Inner Directions publish numerous books, videos and audiotapes on non-duality. http://www.innerdirections.org/

Nataraj Books at Springfield, Virginia have an extensive collection of books from India (over 5,000 titles) on various subjects, including some that are difficult to obtain elsewhere. There is a facility to order online. https://www.natarajbooks.com/main.aspx

The **Vedanta Press** of Southern California has a huge selection and on-line ordering providing that you live in the US. http://www.vedanta.com/

Sentient Publications publishes all of the works of Wei Wu Wei and Steven Harrison amongst others. http://www.sentientpublications.com/

3. In India

Vedams Books are good for buying books on Vedanta (or anything else to do with India). There is a detailed description of nearly every book so you can check whether it sounds like what you are looking for before you order. http://www.vedamsbooks.com/

Zen Publications of Pune and Mumbai, India publish the works of Ramesh Balsekar and stock most of his works together with a number of others. There is no on-line ordering facility, however. http://www.zenpublications.com/

Motilal Banarsidass publishes many books on Advaita, both traditional and modern and it is surprisingly cheap to buy these for export to the UK or US, much cheaper than buying the equivalent books from your local bookstore. They have a detailed online catalogue

and you can purchase books using credit cards. Instead of doing this on-line, you print out a form, fill in the details and fax this. Alternatively the form is emailed after completion. http://www.mlbd.com/

Sundeep Books also publishes a wide range of material relating to India, including a good selection of books on Advaita. Books may be purchased on line via credit cards and prices are quoted in US \$. http://www.sundeepbooks.com/

Samata Books publish the complete works of Sankara as well as his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. http://www.samatabooks.com/

Indian Books Centre are publishers of Indological Books. Books may be ordered online but there are, as yet, no credit card facilities. http://indianbookscentre.com

Saujanya Books have a large number of relevant books with prices, including airmail, in US \$ and payment by Visa or Mastercard. http://www.saujanyabooks.com/index.htm

Some books published by Ashrams can only be purchased from them directly and, in the case of some books, this is very worthwhile. The Advaita Ashrama at http://www.advaitaashrama.org/ is one such example, publishing such books as Swami Nikhilananda's translation of the Mandukya Upanishad. Sri Ramakrishna Math at http://www.sriramakrishnamath.org/ is another specialist publisher, of the recommended Upadesha Sahasri by Sankara, for example.

Thiruppugazh: Glory to Lord Muruga

V. RADHAKRISHNAN

Vedanta is the foundation of the spiritual culture of India. In its various phases, Vedanta represents the progressive thought of man, beginning with a practice of invoking God's beauty, wisdom or external agency and ending in absorption with the Divine which is known as Absolute Non-dualism, the contemplation of the total identity of the subject and object, God and human, beyond which human reason, thought and experience cannot go. The conclusions of the Non-dualistic philosophy are epitomized thus: The Divinity of the soul, the Unity of existence, the Oneness of the Godhead and the Harmony of religions.

Contrary to expectations of an outside observer of the many Gods, practices and temples in India, the highly philosophical Non-dual view is also contained within this apparent and contradictory Dualism.

MOUNTAIN PATH

THIRUPPUGAZH

The Hindu, by which term is gathered up the religious sects and affinities native to India, has a deep sense of the sacred. The history of the various Hindu communities, the traditional culture with its devotional music, dance and poetry, the age-old customs that regulate feasts and pilgrimages, the temples and sacred monuments — all are intimately linked with Hindu 'idolatry'. An idol worshipper can passionately cling to his or her Gods, their stories, legends, and their images, linked as they are with traditions of race, family and culture.

But what is more important to observe is that worship and devotion to the Universal Spirit is contained within the invocation of a anthropomorphic deity enabling a beginner soul — conscious of the many weaknesses and limitations attendant on a human life — to fix his or her mind and strengthen the power of edifying concentration. In the way of Vedanta it is said that in the beginning of the spiritual path the worshipper feels the inevitable need of prayer, self-surrender and other external supports, he or she invokes the personal God for protection, guidance and grace upon his or her own self as upon the family, the village and the entire community. The devotee, a true aspirant (bhakta-sadhaka) might repeat a sacred mantra or sing a stirring hymn or legend glorifying the greatness of his or her chosen deity, and reflecting on its meaning — be it of God's Wisdom, Purity, Eternity, which, the human Soul itself shares in its highest state of redemption or enlightenment. Even Sound as the pranava mantra OM is idealised because it ultimately leads to the Divine Silence, just as the Form of God leads to the ineffable Formlessness. He thus realizes who knows within himself the silent Witness of these diverse forms within the Universe. While devotional songs help one maintain a relationship with the Universal Spirit, deep meditation gradually enables the devotee to become fully absorbed in Sat-Chit-Ananda.

The most widespread object of worship among Hindus are human, or quasi anthropomorphic, representations of the supreme spirit in the form of images — or even abstract stones, spirit inhabited trees or other objects, all of which refer back to legends, festivals, performance, poetic hymns and artistic formulations of all kinds beginning their inspiration in Nature. The earth itself is worshipped as Bhu Devi and

the collective imagery of Hinduism often appears as a veritable evolutionary surge of the instinct towards transcendence. Therefore, worshippers are not bound to any single view of God; they establish a constant relationship with their chosen deities, regarding them variously according to the culture of devotional relationship — as master, father, mother, friend, beloved, *child*, or all of the above combined!

Thus, the awareness of the Many in the One, and the One in the Many is a characteristic of India's ancient cultural and religious life, giving to and deriving from its poetic literature, philosophy, history, music, mythology, rites of passage, games, dietary habits, medicine, physical culture (yoga), culture of education, caste, community, sectarian affiliation, performance art, performing arts, festival arts, sculpture, painting and architecture. As with any culture, it is a mistake to isolate purely 'religious' texts out of the context of the living aesthetic and scientific traditions arising out of ancient India. Religion was not thought of as a separate activity at all until quite recently. In India, especially in her holy places, one is surrounded by the presence of the Gods because they contain not only their images but their legends, their fame, their sacred places where they are said to have trod, or interacted with, their miraculous interventions and the eulogies of their followers.

Muruga, the name of the warrior and adolescent God peculiar to Tamilnadu, is puranically speaking, part of the Saivite pantheon. Unlike Krishna, Muruga is not an incarnation from God into a human form but belongs to the realm of the Gods, perhaps a level of consciousness, perhaps from the Dream Time, but a real person to those who follow him and to whom spiritual obeisance is paid and seen as a route to the Divine Unity. Doubtlessly, like Krishna, standing as a local God on his own in ancient ritual and practice Muruga's historical roots are obscure, but his 'literary' puranic legend where he is brought into the organised pantheon of Gods sees in him a conjoint manifestation of both Siva and Shakti who in universal terms represent the idealised or supreme Father and Mother. Muruga's personality is deeply entwined in the spiritual philosophy and arts of Tamilnadu since Hindu thought does not decry the arts as anti-spiritual — so that if we are to take

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delight, furthermore in art and beauty we should devote this delight to a higher meaning than mere sensuality.

Arunagiri-nathar was born in the 15th Century at Tiruvannamalai. He derived his name from the mountain and the name of presiding deity, Siva as Arunachaleswar. He started his mission of expounding the glory of Muruga through pilgrimage to all holy shrines of Muruga, including the six sacred abodes known as *Arupadaiveedu*. No matter what the fashionable deity of the ruling kings, Muruga was the deity of the Tamil countryside and the vast majority of villages paid their obeisance to him.

Thiruppugazh is a vast ocean of devotional songs on Muruga. It is said that out of 16000 songs Arunagiri composed, only 1328 songs are handed down to us intact. The collection includes 64 episodes of Lord Siva's exploits, known as *Thiruvilaiyadal*, and the graceful power of Shakti-Parvati. The first lady of the songs deal with the trials and tribulations, desires and disillusionment and the predicament of the human mind, unable to find the proper infinite auspicious qualities of Lord Muruga and his benevolence and readiness to respond to the earnest prayers of his devotees who seek the lord's healing touch. Muruga is also known as Subhramanya, 'He who tends to the spiritual growth of the aspirants'.

The story of Muruga in the Skanda Purana describes how he was born in a sacred pool. In his wonderful work *Thiruppugazh*, *Glory to Lord Muruga*¹ the author V. S. Krishnan describes the myth which gives Muruga his name Saravanabhava, that is, 'He who was born in a jungle of reeds'.

At one time, the great God Siva was deeply absorbed in the glory of his spiritual exuberance when the demi-god Kama (Cupid) made an attempt to drag His detached mind towards sensuality. By the fire

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¹ Thirupugazh, Glory to Lord Muruga, by V.S. Krishnan, KRISHNAVENI Publishers, 32A Nethaji St., Vimal Nagar, Vadavalli, Coimbatore—1, Published September, 2005. 370 pages. Price Rs 100/- It is an elucidation and history of the songs of Arunagiri Nathar and related topics based and enlarged upon articles appearing in *The Hindu* newspaper by the author. Non-Tamil speakers please note the 'ZH' ending is pronounced somewhere between and 'L' and an 'R' in Tamil as in Japanese.

THIRUPPUGAZH MOUNTAIN PATH

of austerity, Siva burnt Kama out of existence. Shakti who had been used as a pawn by Kama then made severe penance for gaining the grace of Siva. The son was born of the purity of the parents. The greatness of the issue is ever the outcome of the ethical and spiritual excellence of the progenitors. Soon, there emerged from Siva six flashes like lighting, five from the five senses and one from the mind of the God. They engulfed the sacred Ganga and played into a lake virtually a forest of reed grass. This phenomenon made Shakti go into rapture.

The six flashes of light, which were the seed of Siva that could not be contained by Shakti, reappeared as six babies. These six divine babies floating on the pond were then suckled by the heavenly wet nurses, the six nymphs of the constellation Pleiades (Kritikas — hence another name of Muruga, Karthikeyan) who had come to the rescue. These were translations of Shakti's power. Shakti, otherwise known as the cosmic Mother rolled these six babies into one divine entity maintaining though, the six faces and twelve arms. Clothed in this mythological language, which intends to explain, existing deities whose sources are obscure, is the spiritual rationalisation that life emanates from the conjugation of Purusha and Prakriti, Spirit and Matter — when this life fully evolves it becomes the perfect Soul.

It is said that the epithet Shanmukha (six faces of Muruga) symbolises the six yoga chakras seats of consciousness within the human tabernacle. Since the Gods are associated with Power, Kundalini the spiritual energy which is dormant and coiled up is awakened through intense yogic practice of self-control and continence — the interrelationship of these six planes is symbolically presented as six heads of Shanmukha. The symbolism of the six is also widely used in Muruga's yantra for meditation and ritual, this symbol of converged triangles, recognised in the West as the Star of David. Besides this the six faces of the God connote the six divine qualities of the Supreme Being: they are Omniscience, Non-attachment, Omnipotence, Overlordship, Grace, and Glory.

The shining spear is the symbol of Muruga's power. His vehicle is a peacock, representative of his youthful glory. His mythic exploits prove that this weapon and the wielder thereof are identical in the manner in which fire and its brilliance are the same. The spear symbolizes the power of divine knowledge to destroy the demons of ignorance.

Muruga in the classical traditions is also known as Swaminatha where the Son becomes the preceptor to the Father. Mythology has it that father Siva poses as ignorant of the OM and receives enlightenment about it from the son. This a wonderful hermeneutic of the son and the father becoming one in the transcendental knowledge and the apparent duality of son and father drops away. For the sake of human edification even the Gods allow themselves to gain enlightenment, as the seeming individual soul merges in the cosmic reality.

Thiruppugazh or 'Holy Fame' the devotional collection in Tamil from the songs of Saint Arunagiri-nathar, shows the path to God realization through invocations echoic of his vulnerability. "Oh God, give me the determination and the dedication to remain constant in your worship, and to seek your lotus feet." (Prayer song, 157)

V.S. Krishnan's translations of the famous and popular verses of Kanthar Alankaram and Kanthar Anubhuthi included in Thiruppugazh, deserve praise and appreciation.² He has conveyed much of the charm and elegance of the original, though one would need to hear the originals to catch the cadence and counterpoint. The prime object of his translation and elucidation is "to propagate the noble concepts enshrined in *Thiruppugazh*. It is universal in appeal; the verses blended with devotional music awaken the consciousness, elevating the soul to the Eternal World of God, kindling peace and tranquillity in the heart of devotees." The non-Tamil speaker can appreciate hearing these verses sung or even recited, the rhythm and flexibility of the sounds in the language used by Arunagiri-nathar is both playful and ecstatic, its spiritual mood is infectious to a listener of any language.

him deeply and profoundly was Suruthimudi Monanchol (Prayer song 62).

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² Bhagavan often attended *Thiruppugazh* bhajans. The song by Arunagiri that moved

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VERSE

KEVAN MYERS

Learning To Say Goodbye

The other day
I stole my laptop from myself.
I don't know why,
or why I had to wear the clothes and flesh
of some Tibetan, teenage dope-head,
as my own disguise.

Why did I do it?
Do I need this test
of my reactions
to this kind of stress?

Why, when I found the broken lock and empty desk, was I so calm, when other times would have me wail and beat my breast?

Was it because I knew the hand that carried out this crime was just as truly mine as this, which guides the pen that writes these words, or that, which grabs my arm, and whines, "baksheesh", which makes this other hand a fist, to threaten this intruder that has barged into its bliss?

My much beloved, expensive tool is gone, and though I miss its music and the satsangs I would hear each day,

its pages of my poetry, its games, and photos of my family and friends, I do not think that anything is gone

I cannot live without, and anything that matters can be found somewhere inside my mind, if need is there. And thus I carry on,

waiting to see the consequence and why, I should have removed this precious toy from I.

Yet still I must confess to feeling vexed and insecure, not knowing when I'll come back next to steal more.

Compassion

Grunting upwards, lazy legs, unused to mountain paths, weighed double by my bag, and short of gasping breath, I step aside, to let the faster feet of this Tibetan girl go past.

But she, instead, stops by my side and smiling takes in hand one handle from my bag and slows her stride to match my pace.

And so we walk up hand by hand, with me, inadequate to speak the thanks I feel, but most of all, the joy that there can be in this humility that puts me in my place, confronted by this sister from the human race.

Where The Eyes May Lie

Fool, I am: unsafe and loud, when faced by loveliness, whose shine creates these shadows, which appear to be the x-rays of the horrid side of me.

If it were possible, I'd hide behind a mask, which has no holes for eyes, because it's so much safer when there is no-one to see.

But here outside, I laugh at these dramatic thoughts that wed these visions of an overactive head.

For all the time the me, that chose these roles is seen, by I, who merely moves about so deeply touched by all it finds that no words need come out.

A Question Of Identity

I guess I love to rave about my spiritual affairs, but still I have to ask myself, "Who cares?"

These poems are from a new collection, *Tasting the Spring Where the Pictures Sing*, recently published, available from: dancingyeti@gmail.com

THE CALL DIVINE EXCERPT

Ramana Lives

SADHU ARUNACHALA (ALAN CHADWICK)

The Call Divine was a monthly English magazine published in Bombay dedicated to Sri Ramana. The first editor was Swami Rajeswarananda assisted by Swami Chinmayananada who later established his own organisation. The first issue was released in September 1952. The magazine flourished for twenty three years and finally closed in 1975, with the passing of the managing editor, P. M. N. Swamy. There are few copies still in existence and even the ashram archives does not have a full set; the final four years from September 1970 are missing. If any devotees have copies we would appreciate it if they would be willing to lend them for archiving.

The Call Divine published many interesting articles and rare memoirs about Bhagavan. Though the policy of the newly formated Mountain Path is to publish as far as possible, only original material, we decided in this case to make an exception. The first article in the series comes from the very first issue. Chadwick wrote it in the immediate aftermath of Bhagavan's physical demise, when many devotees felt deeply bereft. Ever the pillar of strength and commitment, he showed the way forward.

Undoubtedly the same peace is to be found at Tiruvannamalai as in the old days when Bhagavan's physical body was still with us. Some people declare that they find it is stronger now than before; formerly, they had been distracted by his form, and now that that

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distraction is no longer there they enjoy undisturbed the bliss of his amazing aura. Did he not himself say during those last sad days: "You say I am going to die. Die! I shall be more alive than ever." And so it is.

But there are still a number who declare that he is dead, that there is no use coming to the Ashram and sitting besides an empty tomb. "No doubt there are psychic vibrations," they admit reluctantly, "but those you can find in any holy place. No, it is no use remaining there, the initial impetus having been given you, you must go off in search of a 'living guru'." Living guru, indeed! Is he not now and ever most living?

But let us examine their argument. It is something like this. Bhagavan having left his body has become absorbed in the Infinite, (you don't mean to pretend that he is still bound to a corpse, do you?) so, except for certain sentimental attachments there is no use remaining in the Ashram or even visiting it. If you do go you may feel certain vibrations, the back-wash, so to speak, of the past, but these are useless for Sadhana, or useful only as a preliminary step which will lead you on to a 'living guru'. But for anybody with any pretense to advancement, it is useless. There's an end of it.

But like so many plausible arguments it is entirely false, for even by these people Bhagavan was admitted to be a *Jivan-Mukta*, one who is already and finally released from ego. And how often did he not say: "You think I am the body, this corpse that I have to bear about. That is where you are wrong. I am universal." You see: "universal," even before he apparently left the body.

The whole mistake is initial, in the interpretation they put on the word *Jivan-Mukta*; or in what they think a *Jnani* really is and how he functions. When it is found that a *Jivan-Mukta* is already absorbed in the Infinite and that for him the apparent change he undergoes is no change at all, there should be no more misapprehension. There is no further step for a *Jnani* to take; he lost all sense of doership or association with a particular body when he finally knew himself to be a *Jnani*. The physical death is only just a happening in the myriad strange happenings in Maya. He was in no way limited to a body while it was functioning. It was

there, one might almost say, for us. We needed something that we could see, somebody who could speak to us. Now we must get along without the comfort of the physical presence, but it does not mean that Bhagavan has gone anywhere, indeed, as he said himself: "Where could I go? I am always here."

While he was in the body his body acted as a visible centre for concentration, as a point to focus at, which drew the disciples to it, something tangible. Yet he never was the body even then, he was and knew he was eternal *Atman* alone. So now what is more appropriate than that the place in which he lived so long and which so permeated with his presence should now serve as this centre for concentration? But to pretend for one moment that Bhagavan Ramana has been dispersed, just blown away in thin air, is madness. How could anybody who knew him talk like this?

But "No, we don't exactly say that. He has become absorbed in the Infinite, become in fact, the Infinite," they would reply. "Now he is everywhere, not just at a point in Madras." But as I said above this is no argument. He was always the Infinite and denied his being in the body. The situation is exactly the same, except that now we no longer have his embodied form before us. But there is still his Ashram and the Samadhi where that sacred body is enshrined.

Theoretically, I suppose, there never was any need to seek him in Tiruvannamalai, even when he was functioning through a body, except for the well-known rule that a Guru is necessary. Yet we felt the need, and living there knew the benefit. Today we can still do the same.

But in the old days he spoke, gave verbal instructions. Now that can happen no more. But to how few *did* he actually ever speak? How many thousands just came and sat before him silently and went away without a word. How many came with their minds bursting with questions and in his presence found all the questions self-answered? All this is still possible.

Still, too, can we sit in front of the Samadhi and receive the most potent vibrations, get answers to our unasked questions, comfort and encouragement when needed.

To what after all did all his spoken instructions amount? "There is only one *self*. You are that."

Amplifying slightly it becomes: there is nothing to do, nothing to seek. There is only a false identification with limitation to discard and that is done by concentration on the Eternal Witness, the One behind all phenomena. Know who you are and there is no more to know. You cannot be the eternally changing body, you witness that; you cannot be the senses that observe and contact, you use them; you cannot be the mind which reasons, that is only a tool; you cannot even be the named individual, because that has its changes of childhood, youth and old age, it is born and it dies, it ceases in deep sleep, it takes entirely new forms and names in various births, you are a witness of that too. But we know, each one of us, that there is a permanent 'I' behind all these functions and changes. If we would only concentrate on that instead of on the apparent world, we should have no more worries or problems.

Any further additions to these teachings were purely given as a sop to the ever-inquisitive mind which wants to know, to probe into the future, but is never satisfied, for as soon as one doubt is cleared there is another waiting to pop up and take its place. Moreover how is it ever possible to clear doubts intellectually? For the moment we may be satisfied, then we forget the arguments, or remember another on our side of the question which we forgot to pose. Bhagavan knowing this spoke little. "Silence is best!" he would say. And here once more are we led back to the Ashram where the same silence can be found, the same presence, the same inspiration, and the same all-absorbing peace.

BOOK EXCERPT

Sound, Words and Language

DENNIS WAITE

The following is an extract from the forthcoming book Back to the Truth: 5000 Years of Advaita by Dennis Waite. It is a comprehensive coverage of Advaita, illustrating the differing approaches through over 550 extracts from 350+ sources, including ancient scriptures, recent sages, modern satsang teachers and writers on the Internet. The book is to be published by O Books in February. 2007, ISBN 1-905047-61-4.

The speaking of a word is the result of a four-stage process according to Advaita. (Actually, this classification began with just three steps - parA was added later. It was devised by the poet and grammarian bhartRRihari in the 7th century AD and explained in his book vAkyapadIya.) Swami Muni Narayana Prasad explains:

The *RRiShi*-s of India, who were also psychologists, saw the process of expressing an idea as having four stages. They are called *parA* (the transcendent), *pashyantI* (visualization), *madhyamA* (medium), and *vaikharI* (the uttered word). The causal Truth which is of the essence of Consciousness is *parA* or the transcendent. Without it nothing happens. In that Consciousness

happens the formulation of an idea or experience which has a specific form. The visualization of that form is called *pashyantI*. This vision has to be brought into the mould of a medium in order to express it. This medium could be a language, mere sound (music), colour, or even concrete forms as in sculptures. This is the third stage called *madhyamA* or medium. The last stage is the expressed form of it, either as words or music, or any other form of expression. This stage is called *vaikharI* which means the uttered word. The word stands here for all the forms of expression as it is the commonest way of communicating ideas.

What a word can do is to express an idea or an experience, which belongs to the second stage of *pashyantI*. Word cannot contain the transcendent as its meaning. It is that transcendent that made the specific vision find expression through words.¹

It is suggested that the mechanism of language formation in the mind and its subsequent expression actually brings about the apparent transformation of the non-dual Consciousness into the seeming differentiation of name and form. The creation is said to be the manifestation of OM (c.f. the statement in the Gospel according to St. John that "In the beginning was the Word").

The effective intent of spiritual practice is to reverse this process and take us 'back' to the state of unmanifest, pure Consciousness. HH Sri Shantanand Saraswati says that:

Most of the worldly communication is materialized in the *vaikharI* state and some in *madhyamA*. The spiritual activities of meditation, reflection etc., comprehend and make use of *madhyamA* and *pashyantI*. When the union is made and the being is himself then he is in *parA*. ²

We make use of words, then, via the scriptures, to point us back to the truth. Words cannot themselves describe Brahman or tell us directly about the nature of reality. The words that we have acquired during our life have been acquired in order to help identify things, talk about feelings etc, i.e. they refer to objects, external or internal, real or abstract. Swami Dayananda:

Known words cannot reveal Brahman because all known words are words that we have gathered to describe things that we already know, which are all limited in nature, like a pot, for example. All these known words are words which deal with genus or species (*jAti*), attributes (*guNa*), actions (*kriyA*), and relationships (*sambandha*).³

Over the thousands of years in which language has been developing, it has shaped more and more the way in which we look at the world and think about reality. Distortions in the meaning and use of words has led to similar confusion and mistaken thinking in the mind and some of these have been crucial in leading us away from the truth. The way in which a word such as 'person' has come to mean the exact opposite of its original intention is but one example.

Steven Harrison describes how this happens:

Understanding language is integral to understanding thought and reality. As we observe the nature of what we are, we also describe the observation. This naming process is necessary for us to function in the world. It is what a child learns as it grows with the primary learning being the difference between 'me' and 'not me'. The use of language or naming is the very thing that differentiates objects, actions, and qualities in the world. This distinction or separation is the basis of intellect and consequently the basis for the apparent manipulation of the world around us. It is not however, the basis for true intelligence.

What is lost in the learning of differentiation is the underlying unity from which this world of names and of separate objects grew. As the "me" center is established and the world that appears to be outside of "me" is learned and described through language, the actuality of the undifferentiated pre-linguistic nature of life is forgotten...

¹ Kena Upanishad, Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, D. K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 1994.

² Conversations, 1973, unpublished material from the School of Economic Science. See also Old Ideas of Language, Ananda Wood. www.advaita.org.uk.

³ Words and What They Reveal (extract from satsang). Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. See also http://www.AVGsatsang.org.

Implicit in the development of language is the "me" and the "me-object" relationship. There is no named without a namer, and no namer without a named. As language develops, we are swallowed by the reality that language creates. ⁴

Even something as basic as the distinction between adjectives and nouns leads to confusion. The example of a 'ring' being only the name for a particular, temporary form of 'gold' was used to highlight the distinction — gold being the 'reality' and 'ring' being *mithyA*, always having gold as its essential nature. **Swami Dayananda** similarly takes the example of a table. He says that, when we use a name such as this, it should refer to an actual object. If I am not using the alleged table for that purpose, however, the name is no longer appropriate.

Strictly speaking, the name should always refer to the actual substantive object which, in the case of the alleged table, is actually 'wood'. 'Table' just happens to be the form in which the wood is currently held. Perhaps the joints are not actually fixed and I can dismantle it in an instant and re-assemble it into a shelf. Form is the 'attribute' of the object and should be expressed as an adjective and not a noun. Thus, rather than talking about a 'wooden table', we should really say 'tably wood'. Similarly, we would say 'ringy gold' instead of 'golden ring', 'potty clay' and so on.

Wood becomes substantive for the time being. But wood itself is an attribute because we can call it earth. It is endless. It will end up only in *nirguNa*, the attributeless. Whenever you describe something, the description requires a substantive. All definitions are descriptions. All descriptions are attributes. All attributes require a substantive. If the substantive is discovered to be an attribute, definitely it requires another substantive. Therefore final substantive should be *nirguNa*, it should be free from attributes.⁶

In other words, everything is Brahman — *sarvam khalvidam brahma*. By following back all of the relative appearances in the world, we eventually return to that from which it is all manifest.

Jayanti

Hans Heimer:

The *bRRihadAraNyaka* [v.I.4.7] states that in the beginning and now, what is called 'the world' consists only of relative (i.e. not ultimately real) distinctions, distinctions of name and appearance (or form). In reality it is all the *Atman*, the real Self. The name is that distinction which arises from language, and the appearance is that distinction which arises from our sensory perceptions. By 'the world' is meant all percepts and concepts, as is made clear when reference is made to body, breath, speech, activities, etc. Now the term 'beginning' is also a word, a concept, so that too is relative and a manifestation of the *Atman*. The beginning is always now, in the ever-present.

The last part of [the verse] gives us a wonderful metaphor, of cattle who have disappeared from view, but who left a trail on the ground which enables the farmer-owner to find them. This metaphor shows that to find the Self, by the trail of all aspects of the entire world, we have to follow to the source of the trail made by that which we value, represented by the cattle. All manifestation is the clue to the source, and it needs reflection and searching before the source can be found. The source is ever present, but it is hidden by name and appearance. ⁶

Swami Krishnananda's commentary on this verse is:

The world that we see is nothing but the form of God, and it is He that is fully present in every form. Whenever we touch any object, we are coming into contact with that Being only. If this awareness could be awakened in a person, at that very moment there could be liberation — here and now.⁷

But, from early childhood, we learn to name each object, thereby irrevocably separating it out from its surroundings and making it exceedingly difficult to return to a virgin perception without the mind leaping in and claiming it, thus preventing the recognition of this truth.

2007

⁴ Doing Nothing, Steven Harrison, Tarcher/Putnam, 1997. ISBN 1-58542-172-3.

⁵ Dialogues with Swami Dayananda, Sri Gangadhareswar Trust, 1988. No ISBN.

⁶ Returning to the Source, Hans Heimer, Self Enquiry, Winter 1998, Vol. 6, No. 3.

⁷ *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Swami Krishnananda, The Divine Life Society, 1984. Also see http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/

RAMANA KIDS' CORNER



Children, come, join me on a tour. We are going to see some of the most exotic devotees of Bhagavan, from across the world at the Ashram. Yes, you guessed right, these devotees are the flora inhabiting the serene grounds of Sri Ramanasramam.

Children, come, join me on a tour. We are going to see some of the most exotic devotees of Bhagavan, from across the world at the Ashram. Yes, you guessed right, these devotees are the flora inhabiting the serene grounds of Sri Ramanasramam.

Bhagavan treated all equally...whether you were a king, a squirrel, a leopard, a child, a plant....all were treated in the same manner, with respect and compassion. Bhagavan did not approve of devotees hurting plants, even if it meant plucking flowers for worship. Today we will pay our respects to the plant devotees of the Ashram, all basking under the protective glance of Bhagavan, at the foothills of the mighty Arunachala. Like true devotees of Bhagavan, they have offered their entire selves in service to Bhagavan and His devotees. Their very presence provides shade, shelter, beauty, and food to all — animal and human devotees alike!

The other day, I was treated to a magnificent tour of the Ashram grounds. At my request, Sri V.S. Mani, along with Smt. Mukta, with loving enthusiasm shared with me the beauty behind the magnificent flora of the Ashram. They shared with me, the names of every plant (the common name, as well as the botanical name), mentioned the uniqueness of the plant, and most interestingly revealed the unknown stories behind the trees, how they came to the Ashram. The vegetation at the Ashram is nurtured lovingly under the watchful supervision of Sri V.S. Mani. He clearly has a personal relationship with each of these plant devotees. Here is his response when asked how so many plants are being taken care of at the Ashram, "There are two aspects to taking care of plants. When you go there, stand there, go by their side, with good feelings they also respond. Plants too have feelings. Secondly, plants need attention. Here in Tiruvannamalai, they need to be watered almost 300 days a year." Over the years, numerous devotees have served the Ashram by tending these plants.

It is no small miracle that more than 120 species of plants are thriving beautifully at the Ashram. Many of these plants were gifted to the Ashram by devotees. There is the olive tree from Italy, the beggar's bowl from Africa, the mad tree, Krishna's buttercup tree, Chinese ylang ylang shrub, rain tree, Persian lilac tree etc., all flourishing on the Ashram grounds.

Who could miss the gigantic banyan trees towards the rear of the Ashram, just before you embark on the trail to Skandashram? Since there was little shade in Palakotu in those days, and knowing that Bhagavan frequented Palakotu, Manavasi Ramaswami Tata, a stellar devotee of Bhagavan, himself planted and watered these trees with great devotion. Today, see what Manavasi Tata's devoted service to Bhagavan has resulted in — massive banyan trees — an eternal favourite of the monkeys! Another very interesting story is that of the *lagerstroemia* (queen's crepe myrtle) tree near the new dining hall. When the construction plans for the new dining hall were made, one realized that this full grown tree, having been planted in the 1940s, had to be moved. There were no cranes or any fancy equipment. Devotees, after chanting and bringing the thirtam (holy water) from Bhagavan's

samadhi, physically transplanted this massive tree to its current location.....a true miracle to see how well it is thriving after such an impossible move. There are so many more moving stories relating to the plants at the Ashram, and I hope to share these with you periodically.

Activity: Trivia Relating to the Flora of Sri Ramanasramam

- 1. Which is the first massive tree that meets your eye when you enter Sri Ramanasramam?
- 2. Where would you find the naga lingam tree?
- 3. Which is the tree regarded as very sacred, right behind Bhagavan's Samadhi?

Answers

i] Illuppai tree; ii] In front of the Maha Nirvana Room; iii.] The *vilvam* tree.

AUDIO CDS AND CASSETTES

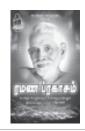
Sri Prabhakar is a renowned vocal artist with some 150 published professionally recorded audio cassettes and CDs in the field of sacred music. With his melodious voice, skilful arrangements and accompaniment by notables such as Madurai G. S. Mani, he has marvellously rendered the poetic works of Sri Bhagavan. Five recordings are available and include most of the daily parayana chanted at the Ashram.

- 1. Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai:
- 2. Ramana Prasadam; 3. Ramana Prakasam;
- 4. Ramana Pravesam;
- 5. Ramana Pravaaham (Malayalam).

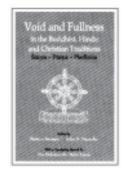








BOOK REVIEWS



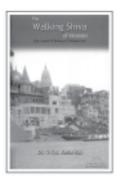
VOID AND FULLNESS IN THE BUDDHIST, HINDU AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS: SUNYA — PURNA — PLEROMA, Ed. By Bettina Baumer and John R. Dupuche, with a concluding speech from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, D. K. Printworld (P) Ltd., F-52 Bali Nagar, Ramesh Nagar Metro Stn., New Delhi, dkprintworld@vsnl.net, 2005, xii, 292 pp. (Hardbound) Rs. 600/US \$ 30.00

Interreligious dialogue is one of the important ways for overcoming cultural and religious differences and misunderstandings, and for contributing to world peace. But such a dialogue has to go beyond the social, institutional and purely academic arena: it has to reach the very depths of the spiritual, philosophical and theological insights of the religious traditions. In Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity such insights are expressed in the apparently opposite, but in reality complementary, concepts of Void (*sunya*) and Fullness (*purna*), in Greek (*pleroma*). These conceptions lead to the respective spiritual experiences and their interpretations in scripture and philosophy.

This volume contains the papers presented at an interreligious seminar at Sarnath, Varanasi, organised by the Abhishiktananda Society, and inspired by the ideas and life of Swami Abhishiktananda (1910-1973). These papers throw light on these fundamental conceptions of diverse traditions and are an invitation to dialogue.

— M. S. Balasubramanian

108 Jayanti 2007



THE WALKING SHIVA OF VARANASI. The Life, Legends & Teachings of Trailingaswami by Dr. V.V.B. Rama Rao. 2004 Pub: Richa Prakashan, Delhi,176pp, Rs. 150/ragupta@ndb.vsnl.net.in www.richaprakashan.com

In the annals of Hindu spirituality we hear and read fantastic stories of yogis that with each

telling become more and more bizarre. Trailalingaswami belongs to this colourful tradition.

He was called *The Walking Shiva of Varanasi* by no less a luminary than Paramahamsa Ramakrishna who saw the swami while on a pilgrimage to Varanasi. It is said that Trailalingaswami born in 1607 somewhere in Visakhapatnam District and attained samadhi in 1887 at Varanasi where he had lived since 1737. He was 280 years old.

The dates jump off the page and a reviewer brought up in a rational age with a modern education baulks at the prospect of confirming these 'facts' for want of proper documentation. The best one can say is 'why not?' In this world anything is possible and if his life inspires us to seek in the disciplines of yoga answers to the riddles of life then the legend has served a purpose.

The author has gone to consider trouble to gather all the available details about this legendary swami and his atypical methods of teaching. He also gives us a substantial section of the conventional teachings the swami gave his sishyas, which are in the line of the sankhya school and esoteric yoga instruction on the chakras.

The author infuses the book with his own enthusiasm. The standard of the writing is somewhat amateurish but is fluent and undemanding.

The same author also gives us three translations from the same publishing house of three well-know religious texts: *The Guru Gita and Some Daily Prayers* pp.165, Rs 30/-.; *Durga Saptashati* pp.54, Rs 40/-.; and *Shiva Puran* pp.240, Rs 150/-. The translations are easy to read and follow the original texts. They are meant for the general reader who wishes to rediscover the tradition without wading through a complex

web of footnotes. They are suitable for those who wish to recite the scriptures. Non-Resident Indians will find them handy. — Amrit Ray

FIRE UP YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS. Get People to Listen, Understand, and Give You What You Want! by 'Captain Bob'. Viva Books Private Ltd. Delhi. 2005 viva@vivagroupindia.net 315pp, Rs.295/-.

There comes a time in everyone's life when they want a Captain Bob to tell them what to do! Capt. Bob is a member of the American National Speakers Association as well as being a firefighter captain, coach and entrepreneur. In other words, he is a successful man in the US public domain. He writes an amusing and insightful book about communication and relationship in a friendly, spirited American style where all advice is directed towards its immediate application in ones' own life. It would be easy to sneer but Capt. Bob does have a point or two worth considering and I enjoyed the unpretentious, no-nonsense approach.

The opening paragraph gives us a glimpse of what lays ahead: 'I love the scene in a hit movie in which a private investigator is in the office of a woman police investigator. They are arguing. Finally, she says, "You know, I could make your life a living hell." His reply is, "No, thank you, I'm not interested in a serious relationship right now."

— Peter Pichelmann

108 MEDITATIONS ON SILENCE by Stuart Rose. Diggory Press. 2006. Available at 1 Camlad House, Forden, Powys SY21 8NZ, UK. www.diggorypress.com & stuart.rose@britishlibrary.net 113pp. £5.95.

For all the words we use to explain and describe Bhagavan's teachings it is quite easy to forget that Bhagavan taught the highest teachings in silence. All our reading and thoughts are preliminary to entering the silent communion with him. Mr. Rose has composed 108 terse meditations which understood in the right spirit help us enter that silence.

'There is no Silence; /There is only Silence. /When I listen, /I hear; /When I listen, / There is nothing to hear.' — Andrew Clement

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Thought and Deep Sleep

Please refer to page 13 in the article "Effortless Meditation", Deepam issue 2006. The author has quoted Bhagavan as saying, "Thought is ever present, including in deep sleep." If one reads the relevant Talk No.307, from where this quote is supposed to have been taken, the statement of Bhagavan reads, "Though ever-present, including in sleep, it is not perceived." What Bhagavan is referring to is the real 'I' that is present even in sleep, though it is not perceived.

People who quote Bhagavan should take meticulous care not to mislead or misquote. Bhagavan expects his devotees to be perfect.

— K. Ram, Tiruvannamalai.

Swami Madhurananda writes in reply:

Thank you for your letter and pointing out the mistake. I regret very much for that. While unfortunately a quotation mark has appeared in the statement (also in my book *Effortless Meditation*, p. 30), which is not Bhagavan's, but mine, the statement, 'Thought is ever present, including in deep sleep' is still valid based on words of Bhagavan appearing elsewhere. True, he generally says, "There is no mind in deep sleep" (Talks 512) implying that there is no thought in deep sleep, as he calls the mind a "bundle of thoughts" (Talks 347). Or he says, "Deep sleep is only the state of non-duality" (Talks 207). However, he throws more light on this mysterious deep sleep by saying, "Exceedingly subtle *vijnanatma* experiences the happy *prajnanatma* by means of

maya mode. ... This brings us to the conclusion that the cogniser, cognition and the cognised are present in all the three states, though there are differences in their subtleties." (Talks314, under the subtitle 'Drops of Nectar').

His statement that there is a cogniser in deep sleep apparently contradicts our experience! If deep sleep is an experience with a cogniser in it, then it is obvious that there must be thought, though exceedingly subtle, as no experience can survive without thought. If 'thought', which is caused by ignorance, is not there in deep sleep then what is it that prevents us from experiencing Reality in sleep? Can just ignorance be there without thought? Is not thought the only medium with which ignorance can assert its presence? So, can we infer that there is thought in deep sleep? Of course this is a controversial issue, as there are Vedantins who use different logics to prove deep sleep is identical with Reality without any duality or thought in it. But as Reality and deep sleep are beyond the reach of the intellect, is it not prudent to give weight to the words of sages like Sri Ramana who have established himself in the Supreme and whose awareness continues even in deep sleep?



Ashtavakra Geetai: (Tamil)

This is a pocket edition of the great advaitic work which is considered to be one of the core texts that expound the purest teachings of advaita. Sri Bhagavan commended this work to all who wished to study the traditional texts.

Price Rs. 20/-; pp.93.

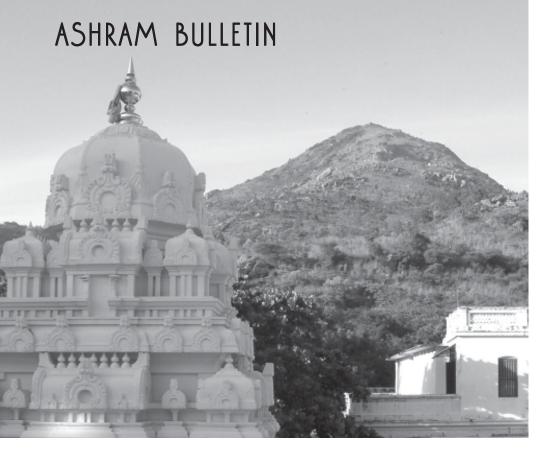


Kaivalya Navaneetha: The Cream of Emancipation

This is a reprint of a classic Tamil advaitic work by Tandavaraya Swami. It contains two sections, 'The Exposition of Truth' and 'Doubts Cleared Away'. Sri Bhagavan frequently referred to this work when answering questions by devotees.

Price Rs. 35/-; pp.70.

II2 Jayanti 2007 II3



Sri Bhagavan's 127th Jayanti

The Jayanti season is the highpoint of the year for devotees of Sri Bhagavan. The atmosphere in and around the Ashram from the start of Navaratri up through the Deepam Festival is one of unmistakable vitality and power, and Bhagavan's presence seems to build up and emanate from every corner of the Ashram. The season culminates in the celebration of Sri Bhagavan's birthday which occurs in the weeks between mid-December and mid-January, the auspicious *Marghazhi* month of the Tamil calendar. The esteemed event this season falls on January 4th and will begin with the traditional dhanurmasa puja in the early morning, followed by hymns on and by Sri Bhagavan, morning milk offering and breakfast at 7am. The day's climax is the mahanyasa puja in the late morning and a special abhishekam performed in the afternoon. Sri Bhagavan's enduring presence is sure to be a blessing for all present in the Ashram on this auspicious occasion.

Karthigai Deepam

The significance of Deepam is well known. It finds its origin in Lord Siva's manifestation as a column of light (*jyothi*) to reveal the folly of Brahma and Vishnu (representing the ego and intellect) who disputed one another as to who was the greater. The sacred fire symbolises the victory of light over the darkness of delusion. In commemoration of Siva quelling the pride of Brahma and Vishnu, a huge cauldron of ghee and camphor is lit on the summit of Arunachala on Karthigai Day at sunset (this year on December 3rd). It usually burns for 7 days (or more), and is visible at a distance of 20 to 25 miles.

At the Ashram, Karthigai Deepam is always celebrated by lighting a small cauldron of ghee simultaneously with the one on the hill. Priests chant *Na Karmana*, perform *arati* to Sri Bhagavan's photograph as devotees sing *Aksharamanamalai*.

The 2006 Deepam festival began with *Dwajarohanam* (flag hoisting) on Friday 24 November. The Silver Celestial Tree and Celestial Cow made their procession on the 27th, the Silver Bull Mount on the 28th and the Main Wooden chariots on the 30th. Bharani Deepam took place in the early morning hours, and Maha Deepam, on the evening of the 3rd of December.

Krishna Yajur Veda Ghana Parayanam

Deepam at the Ashram this year commenced on the morning of the 24th with Yajur Ghana Parayanam which continued throughout the festival. Organised by the Ashram Veda Patasala teacher, Sri Senthil Natha Ganapadigal, recitation of the first pada of the Yajur Veda was conducted by ten Vedacharyas from various places in South India.

Navaratri

The Navaratri celebration at the shrines of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and of Sri Matrubhuteswara started on Saturday the 23rd September and concluded with Vijayadasami on Monday the 2nd October. Laksharchana with Mahanyasa Rudrabhishekam and parayana of sacred works such as *Devi Mahatmyam* were also performed as usual. Saraswati Puja was celebrated in full splendour on the 1st October. On the first three of the nine nights, devotees were blessed to attend Carnatic music concerts in the dining hall organized by Mr. Kandasamy of Trichy.

Deepavali

This festival on October 21st, also known as *Naraka Chaturdasi Snaanam*, commemorates the destruction of the demon Naraka by Sri Krishna on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the Tamil month of *Aippasi*. It is said that anyone who thinks of Krishna on this day will receive His grace. Likewise undertakings on this day are sure to succeed.

Samvatsara Abhishekam

To mark the completion of two years since the completion of Kumbhabhishekam at the Ashram (Nov 3rd, 2004), special puja and homam were performed on Punarvasu Day, November 10th, 2006. Sri Ramana Moola Mantra Homam and other homas were performed with characteristic fervour.

Sri Ramanamaharshi Sat Sanga Vedi, Tamabaram

This centre was inaugurated on 12th November, 2005 at its location at A-4 Preethi Apartments, 101/22A, Thiruvalluvar Street, East Tambaram, Chennai. The Vedi's first anniversary was celebrated on the 12th of November, 2006, commencing with pooja and prayers, followed by talks on Sri Bhagavan by Dr. S. Ram Mohan in the adjacent Vidya Mandir Matriculation School.

Ramana Kendra Hyderabad

On September 24th Sri Ramana Kendra, Hyderabad, celebrated the release of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a rich collection of 160 accounts by devotees who met Bhagavan, edited by Professor Laxmi Narain. Sri T. N. Chaturvedi, the Governor of Karnataka, and Ashram President Sri V. S. Ramanan were the chief guests. The book is available in the Ashram Book Shop at Rs. 200/-.

Green Tiruvannamalai

Abundant precipitation this rainy season has transformed the landscape on and around the Mountain. Tirthams around Arunachala are filled to the brim as is the Ashram well, Pali Tirtham and the various lakes around the town. In mid-November the Samudra lake was reported to be overflowing and this, for an unprecedented second year in a row. Forests, fields and groves have been converted to veritable jungles and contented local farmers anticipate a plentiful harvest this year.

ll6 Jayanti