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Ramana Ashtottaram

69. ओं श्रीशोणाचलहृद्भूतस्कन्दाश्रम निकेतनाय नमः ॥

om śrīṣoṇācalahṛdbhūtaskandāśrama nīketanāya namaḥ ॥

Prostration to the dweller in Skandasramam, the heart of the Red Hill.

Sonachala, the Red Hill, is one of the names of Arunachala. Virupaksha is a name of Siva. The true Virupaksha cave is the spiritual heart on the right side where the spaceless and transcendent Being is ever present. Siva or *sat* is the reality, the Being-Awareness, whose centre is everywhere, in every living being and in every particle of matter, and whose circumference is nowhere. *Satya* is the truth whose centre is in *sat*, pure Awareness, and whose circumference is in relative reality, in time and space; the other centre of this *satya* is the individual human heart, physical and tangible. The two, *sat* and *satya*, are apparently distinct, but are clearly and closely related and ultimately identical.

Sat is now embodied as *satya*. Virupaksha or Siva has taken concrete shape as Skanda. The transcendent has been made accessible as Sukumara, as Sunlight on the Ganga, as fire on earth, as a man among men. Kumara as Skanda now lives in Skandasramam, the heart of Arunachala, the Mountain which is the very embodiment of Father Siva, and hence the centre of this universe, itself composed of pure Awareness. Skandasramam is the centre of this centre.

Bhagavan, as Skanda, lived here for six years (1916-1922). If Virupaksha is the spiritual centre, Skandasramam is the visible, tangible, geographical centre of the Hill which is the centre of this world.

The name Skandasramam and its meanings, for those who believe in synchronicity came from a simple man, Kandaswami, a strong and sincere devotee who did the hard work of cleaning the jungle and putting up the modest structure. It had a fresh water spring and was a better place of residence than Virupaksha cave. It was higher up the Hill and soon became an Ashram, commodious and hospitable, with the Mother as hostess. ▲

EDITORIAL

The Challenge of Suffering

Suffering is an inescapable characteristic of the human condition: **S**no one is free of physical, emotional or mental suffering. The only difference being the degree and predominant aspect. The implacable fact of suffering has baffled humankind from the moment consciousness arose in the minds of people. In a sense it defines us, for suffering is a challenge that stimulates us to ask why we should suffer and goads us into finding the means of release from its insidious grip.

If we impersonally view suffering, it is the negative principle of manifestation. There cannot be a positive without a negative and so to dream that one can rid suffering from the world is foolish. No sooner has one negativity been resolved than another appears. This is not to say we should be supine and not fight injustice, poverty and gratuitous physical and mental anguish. No, to the contrary, it is our duty to be compassionate and do all we can to alleviate suffering in others as well as ourselves.

Suffering has the advantage of provoking that sharp and relentless question ‘Why?’. Life is not fair. There is always imbalance somewhere. We could argue endlessly about the external conditions of the world and support or offer various solutions to alleviate suffering. Bhagavan repeatedly responded to questions about saving the world with the admonition that first we should look to ourselves and the world will take care of itself. This injunction is not a denial of the world’s importance or a call to live in a bubble. We are the world and what we do as individuals affects the world. The genius of Mahatma Gandhi was to realize that each act we perform consciously can cause momentous change. Consider the Salt March of 1930 when he defied the British authorities by walking to the sea and making salt in a pan. By this simple act he demonstrated the independence of the individual Indian who was ostensibly subjected to a law and tax over which he had no say. Gandhi undermined the foundation of a complex structure which did not respect the will of the people by a simple, personal demonstration of his independence.

We in our own lives have the same opportunity. We unconsciously adhere to customs and rules that are meant to ease the strain of living. Eventually all such structures become antiquated and instead of helping, they hinder. The dictums we lived under as children are not the same as those we live under as adults. We are constantly being made aware of our responsibilities and if we listen carefully and exercise intelligence we flow with the stream of life, do what is appropriate and enjoy being alive. If we do not see correctly and interfere with the flow, either willfully or by neglect, we suffer. And suffering comes in so many guises. It is the challenge which wakes us up, although we often don’t appreciate it till later. If we did not suffer we would be inert. One may as well be a worm for all the good it does.

Have you noticed the impersonality of physical suffering for example? We all have experienced pain in the dentist’s chair. We dread the prospect and stiffen ourselves as the dentist begins work. Even the slight jab of a skilled needle can cause a momentary jolt of pain. Have you noticed that if one pulls back and watches carefully, the sensation of pain is purely an impression, a piece of information?

It has nothing to do with us. There is no emotional content that says we are a wronged victim nor is there mental confusion — the operation has to be done. The dentist is not to blame though he or she is an instrument that causes it. And the body is not to blame for reacting. It is all an impersonal inevitable process and the less we revolt against the procedure the easier it is to overcome. A childish tantrum is pointless. We flow with what is appropriate. The same principle can be applied to our lives in whatever form it takes.

The German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche was reported to have said: “He who has a why can endure any ‘how’.” Our problem is not how to eradicate suffering — an impossibility— but to make sense of it, that is, invest it with meaning. When we ask why, we instinctively assume there is an answer that makes sense to our intelligence and the fact that we do not find it on the first, second or third attempt, or even after a lifetime of pursuit, does not negate its validity. The challenge is not suffering per se but to find meaning in the suffering. What impels us as human beings is to transcend the limits placed on us through the exercise of choice. Though the means may be different, all religions emphasise the act of transcendence. Our lives become manageable or meaningful because of transcendence. Our life can be transformed into a creative process if we exercise the right choice. Even if one is circumscribed to the extent of a prisoner in a gaol obliged to follow a rigid routine, our spirit can become depressed and resentful or we see in it a challenge that affirms our independence: we will not be broken by blind fate. If we are forever stuck in the same groove, and surrender to negativity our life would be hell and unbearable. Did not Nelson Mandela affirm in his twenty seven years of enforced labour on Robben Island that he was the ‘captain of his soul’? Defeat is when we become like our oppressors whether it be a human enemy or an inhuman circumstance. Evil wins when we behave the same way to get our own back.

In this respect, if we see suffering as an opportunity and not an obstacle, we will find the right meaning. The miracle of life is that though the world is full of suffering, it is also full of ways to overcome it. It’s beauty is that when we do overcome a flaw or cause of pain,

we grow in mysterious ways and become a better person for it. The act of transcendence is a cause for joy.

There are many diseases which we are obliged to overcome if we wish to live. There are physical emotional and mental diseases. With the advances in modern science many diseases which were potentially fatal have been tamed, though not all. There are also emotional and mental diseases which we ignore at our peril. Hatred, bitterness and rage plague us with their insidious cancers of the heart. Mental diseases of stress, anxiety and loneliness eat away at our crucial self-confidence. We are confronted in the world with the excesses of consumerism where tantalising desires are dangled before us. Our minds and hearts are offered promises of delight if we would but subscribe to the dreams paraded in magazines and television. It is difficult to keep a clean heart and mind when the deluge of impressions pour into us at the slightest interest. Though we may pity the prisoners who live behind bars we too, are also prisoners to the beliefs and customs foisted on us by birth, culture and education.

One of the reasons the appeal of Sri Ramana is so strong is that here is someone who is free of all such constrictions. A simple man whose only possessions are a loincloth, walking stick and water pot, he walked on this earth a free man. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are constantly asking ourselves how this is possible. Why is this person free and I am not? What is the difference and how can I change? Bhagavan found meaning in his life not through acquisition but renunciation. He discovered that what was important had nothing to do with the identity, name and form called Venkataraman. That single act of transcendence when he defied death released him from the rigid conformity of society and even religion, for he had arrived at the fourth, *turiya*, beyond all considerations of adjusting to the patterns of the society in which he was born. He was delivered from the innate determinants of the body-mind complex.

We all aspire to this state but it is our misconceptions which prevent us. We think suffering is a monster which thwarts us for without it, we would be free and happy. We fear the unknown and we spin out dreams of how it all should be if our world could be perfect. These

are all the stuff of dreams and delusions. The world is perfect as it is, not as a place to live forever in continuous bliss but a halfway station in which we have the chance to learn those lessons that can free us from the bonds of our own ignorance.

What is it that prevents us from living in the moment? This may sound simplistic but the moment is all we have. All that we are, own, think and feel are but passing phenomena. It does not matter how much we try to hold on, all things must pass. Suffering arises when we refuse to accept this inexorable fact. Gautama the Buddha did not claim originality in his fundamental teaching. This truth has governed the evolution of human consciousness throughout the innumerable cycles of existence. Why then, do we not listen and heed this axiom?

It is because we forget. The timeless moment that seems inconsequential or irrelevant is therefore considered unimportant. But really, what else do we have? The sharp stab of suffering brings us back to that point. It reminds us where we should be. It is a friend, not an enemy. The sooner we turn around our conception of suffering and accept it in whatever manifestation it takes, the sooner we come to understand and accept the possibility of transcendence. It is never easy, it can be bloody, cruel and heartless and we can feel torn apart by forces beyond comprehension.

For those who follow in the footsteps of Bhagavan we all have experienced in some measure the bounty of his grace and the healing power of his silence. Bhagavan has revealed to us the way. He demonstrated that even though his body was racked with cancerous and untold suffering, he was free. He showed time and again such consideration for others. Bhagavan does not absolve us from our *prarabdha-karma* but he does give us the strength to overcome it. Whatever the obstacle, however dense our ignorance, no matter how mulishly we behave, no matter how fragile is our hold on everyday life and however unwanted we may feel, the compassion of the guru is constant and limitless. We are indeed fortunate to be at the feet of Bhagavan whose compassionate eyes reveal a heart as wide as the sky.





Sunrise over the river Ganga at Varanasi

Alexander Shivalov

Understanding Self-enquiry

Part One An Overview of the Method

N. A. MOHAN RAO

Of the different methods for Self-realization, Self-enquiry may be said to be drawing an ever-increasing attention in modern times. The directness of its logic and the simplicity of its practice, so assiduously brought home to us by Bhagavan Ramana, induce us to attempt it in preference to other established methods. A great many fortunate ones succeed in making it their sole *sadhana*.

However, it appears that many among the lay adherents to Self-enquiry do not have an adequate comprehension of the method. They find it difficult to fathom the exact manner of enquiring into the origin of the I-thought.¹ Some infer the right method correctly,

¹ For typical cases, see *Be As You Are*, David Godman (Ed.), Penguin Books (1992), Chapter 6, 'Self-enquiry – misconceptions'; and also *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, §197, 290, 321, 322, 363, 430 (9/ed, 1994); *Maharshi's Gospel*, Book II, p.35, (2007).

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but do not feel sure of it, as their experience does not seem to tally with what they read from books. So, they keep looking for alternatives instead of pursuing steadfastly the direct course that their intuition tells them is correct.

It is therefore advisable to obtain a proper understanding of the method before we start Self-enquiry.² We will then realize that the practice puts us at once in sight of the 'distant' goal, much as a mountaineer obtains a glimpse of Mount Everest from afar through layers of mist and fog.³ There will be no more doubt as to our being on the right track, however long our practice may take for its fruition.⁴

An attempt is made here to present a detailed understanding of Self-enquiry in the light of the above. At first, an overview of the method is given, without going into the specifics of enquiring into the Self. These specifics pertaining to the inner *core* of practice are taken up in Part Two, based on the explanations given by Bhagavan, and with due note taken of the reported experiences and observations of some of Bhagavan's foremost disciples.

Sadhana by Self-enquiry

Sadhana for Self-realization is the process of progressive withdrawal of the mind from its forays in the wide world, to its source, the Self. This withdrawal of the mind, which really amounts to 'renunciation of the non-Self',⁵ may be said to take place in three stages.

² We shall see in Part Two that there is an empirical way which can make do with a limited understanding of the method. But the majority of *sadhakas* may nonetheless be inclined to seek the fuller understanding.

³ Bhagavan has compared Self-enquiry to the coaxing of an errant cow (the mind) back to its own farm (the Heart) by holding a handful of luscious grass (a 'preview' of the Self) before it. *Talks*, §563.

⁴ As Bhagavan says, the seeker feels sure of his way, in much the same manner as a dog that is in possession of its master's scent. The time to reach the goal will depend on how intently he pursues it.

⁵ The non-Self (insentience) will seem to have a *real* existence of its own as long as ignorance lasts, and so needs to be renounced to attain the Self. It resolves itself into the Self upon Realization. Vide *Talks*, §192, (p.159); §626, (p.590). Thus, what we truly renounce in the end is our wrong idea about the non-Self, and not non-Self itself.

At first, we (as the mind) give up the so-called 'external' world, which means the world of our sensory interactions (sight, touch, etc). In practice, it amounts to giving up interest in sense-objects, and is referred to as cultivation of 'external' (or *bahir-*) *vairagya*. If, with such a detached mind, we sit in an *asana* for practising Self-enquiry,⁶ the body makes no demands for attention from the mind, and so, in effect, we transcend the *gross* body. It signifies the first stage of renunciation, which relates to the *physical* plane.

Our consciousness is then limited to the *subtle* sphere, which is the world of our thoughts. We now have to renounce this 'internal' world. We give up every thought that comes to the mind, and adhere just to the 'I-thought' which lies at the root of them all. We may call this 'internal' (or *antara-*) *vairagya*. Our consciousness now becomes confined to our 'subtle body', or more specifically, to the *vijnanamaya-kosa* (intellect, with ego as its modification⁷). This represents the second stage of renunciation.⁸

The 'I-thought' is otherwise called the 'ego'. It is often looked upon as the 'gateway' to the Self, because it is only after crossing it that we gain a glimpse of the Self. As Bhagavan says, when the mind or the ego⁹ looks outward, it sees the 'world' (whether 'external' or 'internal', or both). When the mind turns inward, it is said to be identified with

⁶ The *asana* posture is advised since it can be held long, and the mind is not distracted by a need to shift posture. After gaining experience, the practice can be extended to other periods involving activity.

⁷ Cf. *Vivekachudamani* (v.184), Text and translation, Swami Madhavananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata (1989). The mind, when viewed as the agent, is called the 'ego'. The same mind, when viewed as the instrument, is called the 'intellect'. The ego and the intellect may thus be viewed as modifications of each other. In *Talks*, §277, Bhagavan identifies the 'I-thought' (ego) with *vijnanamaya-kosa*.

⁸ We do not aim to renounce this last remnant of the subtle body at this stage, as it will *land* us in the *causal* zone, which is characterised by deep sleep wherein there can be no further effort (vide *Talks*, §191). We need to keep hold of the intellect till such time as we transcend the causal body, for making the required effort. It is transcended along with the causal body at the point of Realization. Cf. *Maha Yoga*, K. Lakshmana Sarma, p.105 (9/ed, 1996).

⁹ Verse 18 of *Upadesa Saram* establishes the equivalence of the mind and the ego.

the Self. This ‘turning inward’ of the mind is the most crucial step in Self-enquiry practice. We shall consider it in detail in Part Two. The general idea is as follows.

When we delve into the ‘I-thought’, we hurtle down into the causal plane, comprised of the numerous *vasanas* (predispositions or ‘tendencies’) that have accrued to us from innumerable past lives and the present one. These *vasanas*, though unseen, tend to obscure our view of the Self, which lies at the core of the ‘I-thought’ — as its very source. If we can somehow negotiate our way, bypassing these *vasanas*, just as a person might grope his way past obstacles in a dark room towards a ticking clock, we will be able to reach our goal, the Self. Basically, this is what Self-enquiry is all about. This ‘transcendence’ of the *vasanas*, in other words, the *causal* body, constitutes the third stage of renunciation, and leads to Realization.

Sadhana can thus be viewed essentially as a matter of transcendence of the three bodies in ‘successive’ stages of renunciation.¹⁰ Self-enquiry, as a method of *sadhana*, is primarily understood to comprise the second and third of these stages.

Realization and Liberation

The term ‘Realization’ (short for Self-realization) is used in literature in two ways. When used in the context of a gradual unfoldment of *sadhana*, the term is understood to mean ‘Self-abidance’.¹¹ In the wider context of, say, the goal of life or in a comparison of *sadhana* methods, the term is taken to be synonymous with ‘Liberation’. In the present article, the discussion mostly concerns the ongoing process of *sadhana*. Hence, ‘Realization’ shall generally be understood here in the sense of ‘Self-abidance’.¹²

¹⁰ The term ‘renunciation’ has been applied here to all the three stages only for purposes of a uniform presentation. In common usage, only the first of these stages is referred to as *vairagya* (renunciation) and the latter two stages as *abhyasa* (practice).

¹¹ An instance of such usage may be found in *Talks*, §562, pp.520-21, (9/ed, 1994).

¹² The only exceptions arise in paragraph one of the article, and in footnote 5, where it means ‘Liberation’.

‘Realization’, thus, is held to be different from Liberation. Liberation involves a total annihilation of all *vasanas*, and is irrevocable. Realization, on the other hand, can result even from a temporary transcendence of the *vasanas*, brought about by the strength of will of the seeker¹³ (enabled by Grace). Since the *vasanas* are not destroyed, they re-establish their hold on the seeker some time later.¹⁴ This they do by projecting thoughts, and so disrupting the ‘thought-free awareness’ that characterises Realization. As long as the causal body of *vasanas* lasts, it keeps projecting the subtle world of thoughts sooner or later. When it happens, the seeker is obliged to repeat Self-enquiry to regain the state of Realization.¹⁵

So, if the state of Realization is to last permanently, the *vasanas* must be extinguished totally. The seeker is powerless to bring this about *directly* by himself because the *vasanas* belong to the causal plane which is ‘subtler’ than his mind, the sole instrument at his disposal.¹⁶ He cannot therefore discern the *vasanas* (causal objects) with his mind — just as we cannot see our thoughts (subtle objects) with our physical eyes. So, the only way available to the seeker for overcoming the *vasanas* is an *indirect* one.

When we indulge in any thought (with or without bodily action), a residual impression, or *vasana*, of it is left behind in our causal body even after the thought has passed.¹⁷ If the same thought is repeated a

¹³ The ‘will’ may be viewed as an intense feeling towards the Self, somewhat of the kind felt by Bhagavan while meeting his death experience in Madurai. Vide *Mountain Path*, Oct-Dec 2009, p.63.

¹⁴ “The predispositions adhering to him from time immemorial draw him out and so ignorance overtakes him.” *Talks*, §95. See also §24, 141, 465, 562.

¹⁵ The will of the seeker gathers strength as a positive *vasana* as *sadhana* progresses. *Sadhana* can thus be viewed as a battle royal between the good and the bad *vasanas*.

¹⁶ In referring to the seeker as masculine, the term ‘he’ is not taken to be gender-specific, but to stand in common for ‘he’ and ‘she’.

¹⁷ It must be noted that it is not the actions themselves that create the *vasanas*, but the thoughts behind them. The *vasanas* are binding or non-binding depending on whether the thoughts are of attachment or free from it. *Nishkamyā-karma* does not produce any binding *vasanas* since the thought behind it is free from attachment.

number of times, the *vasana* gathers strength. It is somewhat like the furrows in a farmer's land getting deeper and deeper with his repeated tilling of the land. A *vasana* ('tendency') has the characteristic trait that it reinforces and projects time and again the original thought that caused it. If we entertain that thought, as we are normally prone to do, it, in turn, reinforces that *vasana*. There is thus a natural tendency for the *vasanas* to grow strong and become firmly entrenched.

If the farmer leaves his tilled land unattended and exposed to the elements for long enough, the furrows are levelled due to the forces of nature and disappear. Similarly, if by holding on to the state of Self-abidance (which is thought-free), the *vasanas* are denied any scope to project thoughts (and so reinforce themselves), they shrivel and die under the glare of the Self.¹⁸ This is the *indirect* and the *only* way to annihilate the *vasanas*.

Hence, the *sadhaka* should always try to remain in the state of Realization. This also helps in other ways. Since the seeker now spends less time in the 'thoughtful' state, there is less scope for the creation of new *vasanas*. Meanwhile, his will too gathers strength as a positive *vasana*. As a result, he can remain longer in the state of Realization, and this in turn further weakens the *vasanas*. There will thus be a snow-balling effect in favour of the extinction of all *vasanas*, which brings about Liberation.

From the above it is clear that both Realization and Liberation are states of abidance in the Self. Realization is 'thoughtless', but can co-exist with dormant *vasanas*. Liberation, on the other hand, is 'thoughtless' as well as '*vasana*-less'. Realization, when it is rendered permanent by the eradication of all the *vasanas*, is Liberation.¹⁹

¹⁸ "The ego does not die unless the Self's glance falls on it." *The Garland of Guru's Sayings*, v.920. See also *Talks*, §219. Sleep too is a thoughtless state, but it does not lead to obliteration of the *vasanas* since it is not endowed with the light of the Self.

¹⁹ "Experience [of the Real] is said to be temporary or permanent." *Talks*, §95. See also § 57, 562.

Self-enquiry as a Three-step *Sadhana*

We generally tend to think that Self-enquiry consists of two steps, namely, giving up the existing thoughts in favour of the 'I-thought', and investigation of the source of the 'I-thought' to attain the state of Realization. This however, is not the complete picture. *Sadhana* cannot end with mere Realization, since it will lapse after some time and ignorance will return, due to the influence of the *vasanas*. Hence the aim must be to abide in the state of Realization as long and as often as possible till all the *vasanas* are extinguished and Liberation is attained. Self-enquiry, therefore, must be considered to consist of not two, but *three* steps; the third step being a continued abidance in the Self.

Two-step and One-step Models of Self-enquiry

When a seeker, relatively new to the practice of Self-enquiry, sits for practice, he will be besieged by thoughts to an unprecedented degree, as his mind tends to revolt sensing his efforts to discipline it. The seeker will then find it appropriate to use the query, "To whom are these thoughts?" to which the answer, "To me" brings to the fore the 'I-thought'. As he advances in his *sadhana*, the distracting thoughts decrease, and he finds that he can summon the 'I-thought' in an instant by merely willing it, without need for the query. It means he has no more use for the first step of Self-enquiry. To him, Self-enquiry now consists of only the latter two steps, namely, investigation of the 'I-thought' to attain the Self, and continued abidance in the Self. We may refer to this as the 'two-step model' of Self-enquiry.

When the seeker, who is up to this level, wants to investigate the source of the 'I-thought', he first asks himself, "Whence am I?"²⁰ In order to get the answer he plunges into the causal zone, where he is, so to say, to 'grope' for his Self. Initially, he may not succeed in 'sighting' it clearly, but with sustained practice finally achieves it. With

²⁰ An alternative is to use the question, "Who am I?" However, Bhagavan in his latter days seems to have favoured the use of "Whence am I?" which he says is the *true import* of "Who am I?" Vide *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, Entry of 1.12.1945, p.47. (1989). Vide also *Talks*, § 67, §202; and *Upadesa Saram* (v.19).

further practice at this level, he reaches a stage when he can summon his abidance in the Self with just a little effort,²¹ just as he became able to summon the ‘I-thought’ earlier. He then has no more need for the said query. Self-enquiry, for him, is reduced to the single step of abidance in the Self. We shall refer to this as the ‘one-step model’ of Self-enquiry.²²

We thus see that the interpretation of Self-enquiry differs with the degree of maturity of the *sadhaka*. When the *sadhaka* is fresh to the task, it will appear to him as a three-step *sadhana*, and as he gathers experience, the number of steps is reduced to two and then to one. When we read Bhagavan’s teachings, we come across certain statements which are specific to *sadhakas* with one or more of these backgrounds. If we do not distinguish them properly, such statements will be incomprehensible, and throw us into confusion. The following cases illustrate the point.

Effort in Self-enquiry

Bhagavan has said that in Self-enquiry, though effort is at first required, a stage will come, short of attainment of the goal, when it will be impossible to put in any effort.²³ At first this statement will look puzzling, since we cannot ordinarily fathom how a *sadhana* can go on without any effort. The meaning will be clear only when we admit step-3 as a part of Self-enquiry, such as in the three-step model of Self-enquiry. We see then that effort is required to practise the first two steps. But when we come to the last step — that of continued abidance in the Self — there is no scope to make any effort since the ‘agent’ (ego) that is to make the effort, is merged in the Self. Yet, *sadhana* continues by way of annulment of the *vasanas*.²⁴ Thus Bhagavan’s statement applies to the three-step or two-step model.

²¹ *The Garland of Guru’s Sayings*, v.399.

²² The main obstacle to his *sadhana* at this stage could be the *vasana* that temporarily blocks his ‘will to do *sadhana*’, when he is out of the state of Realization.

²³ “All that you need do is to find out its [ego’s] origin and abide there. Your efforts can extend only thus far. Then the Beyond will take care of itself. ... No effort can reach it.” *Talks*, §197. See also §78.

²⁴ *Talks*, §197, p.163, (1994).

Means and Ends

Bhagavan has often characterised Self-enquiry as a *sadhana* in which the means are the same as the end.²⁵ The statement can be baffling, since the question arises, “If they are identical, how does one *lead* to the other?” Further, if they are the same, the end must be realized the moment the means are set in motion, negating any need for *sadhana*. These anomalies disappear when we realize that here Bhagavan is identifying Self-enquiry with the one-step model. According to this view, *sadhana* consists merely in holding onto ‘the abidance in the Self’,²⁶ and this too, serves as the *means* to eradicate the *vasanas*. When *sadhana* concludes with the eradication of all the *vasanas*, the end-state of Liberation is obtained. This is a state of abidance in the Self. The *means* adopted for *sadhana* are thus the same as its *end*.

Duality and Non-duality in *Sadhana*; Meditation and Self-enquiry

The two-step model of Self-enquiry has been adopted by Bhagavan for the categorisation of meditation and Self-enquiry. Meditation, as he says, consists of ‘concentration on a single thought’, the thought being that of an ‘object’. An ‘object’ is regarded as an entity *external* to the ego, which is the ‘subject’ or ‘doer of *sadhana*’. Bhagavan therefore terms meditation as an ‘objective’ *sadhana*. In the two-step model of Self-enquiry, the attention of the seeker initially starts with a consideration of the ‘I-thought’, which is the ego or the ‘subject’. It ends with the Self, which is *internal* to the ego, and with which the ego *identifies* itself. Self-enquiry is thus concerned all through with the ‘subject’ *alone*. It is therefore termed a ‘subjective’ *sadhana*, unlike meditation which is ‘objective’. Bhagavan is emphatic that *this is how* meditation and Self-enquiry differ from each other.²⁷

²⁵ *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, Entry of 1.12.1945, p.48,(1989).

²⁶ *The Garland of Guru’s Sayings*, v.1193-94.

²⁷ “Meditation requires an object to meditate upon, whereas there is only the subject without the object in *vichara*.” *Talks*, §390. See also §338, §52.

So, if ever a doubt should arise as to whether a particular *sadhana* is meditation or Self-enquiry, the issue should be settled on the basis of this criterion.

If, instead of the two-step model, we adopt the single-step model for Self-enquiry, *sadhana* consists of mere abidance in the state of Realization, which is a non-dual state. From this viewpoint, Self-enquiry can be termed a ‘non-dual *sadhana*’. Other *sadhanas* such as meditation necessarily involve the ego, which is composed of many parts,²⁸ and so they come to be classed as ‘dualistic’ *sadhanas*. The duality referred to here is the *absolute* duality — that between the Self and the non-Self, whereas the categorisation given by Bhagavan is based on the subject-object duality at the level of the ego, not the Self.

Meditations mistaken for Self-enquiry

Certain meditations are sometimes mistaken for Self-enquiry due to the similarity of terms used in their nomenclature. Notable examples are ‘meditation on the heart-centre’, and the so-called ‘meditation on the Self’. Meditation on the heart-centre finds mention in the *Upanishads* under the name of *dahara-vidya*,²⁹ and is regarded as an important kind of *saguna* meditation. Here, the object of meditation is a small cavity imagined to be there in a subtle ‘heart’ situated near the breast-bone. This is sometimes confused with the Heart spoken of by Bhagavan as our spiritual centre, and on this basis ‘meditation on the heart-centre (understood as Heart)’ is taken to mean Self-enquiry. This is clearly incorrect, since the Heart cannot be an ‘object’ to the ego, but is its very source. There can therefore be nothing like a ‘meditation’ on the Heart to speak of.

The term ‘meditation on the Self’ has been used by Bhagavan on at least two occasions,³⁰ and on both occasions it is clear that he meant it as a meditation, and not Self-enquiry. However, since the

²⁸ “This ‘I’-thought is not pure. It is contaminated with the association of the body and senses.” *Talks*, §266. A detailed analysis of the I-thought is taken up in Part Two.

²⁹ *Brihadaranyaka Up.*, IV.4.22. The term *dahara* denotes ‘cavity in the heart’.

³⁰ *Talks*, §52 of 9.6.1935; and *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, Entry of 21.1.1946.

true Self cannot be an object of thought, the term must be understood to stand for ‘meditation on an aspect of the Self’. Such a meditation is said to be of two kinds, namely, *nirguna* and *saguna* meditations,³¹ and finds wide mention in the *Upanishads*. ▲

(To be concluded)

³¹ *Nirguna* meditation is concentration on an object that has no quantifiable attributes — e.g., *Om* (cf. www.swami-krishnananda.org/panch/panch_09a.html). *Saguna* meditation uses a number of objects with quantifiable attributes, such as the heart-centre. In informal expression, the term ‘meditation on the Self’ is sometimes used to mean commonly either meditation or Self-enquiry, and on rare occasions, to mean Self-enquiry. Such usage is not advised in serious disputations.

The Names of Lalitha

Ramesh Menon

Wise, unfettered you,
Nirabadha, free as light:
red shaft of the sun.

Maha tandava
Sakshini, who watch him end
the sky with his dance;
you are the final witness,
and the music in his blood.

Maharati, you are the last temptation,
the final desire;
beyond the body’s dim lamps,
you are the calescent sun.

The poems are loosely based on the Japanese tanka form of 5 lines. A tanka is a haiku with two extra 7-syllabled lines. The lines have 5/7/5/7/7 syllables, in that order.



Echammal



Lokammal



Sampurnammal



Nagammal

Widowhood as a Spiritual Catalyst

Widows at the Ramanasramam

VIJAYA RAMASWAMY

To illustrate the social and emotional affliction caused by widowhood and its role as spiritual catalyst, I shall provide a brief profile of the women who came to Ramanasramam and opted to live, work and die there. Many of these widows who began by serving in the ashram kitchen, are today remembered as diarists, essayists, poets and interpreters.

A recurrent pattern in the lives of the women who came to seek refuge at Ramanasramam is destitution, widowhood and great personal suffering. Sri Ramana's presence provided the healing touch, restored their sense of dignity and purpose in life and turned them gently onto the path of spirituality. Initially they came to seek at the

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feet of Sri Ramana spiritual solace rather than spiritual enlightenment. The metamorphosis of these women into spiritual aspirants occurred slowly but surely. Instances of women coming to Ramanasramam on a spiritual quest were rare but not wholly unknown.

Echchammal (Mandakolathur Lakshmiammal) was a sad woman. Before she turned twenty five she had lost in quick succession her husband, son and daughter. In the prime of life she was widowed, childless and destitute. There was nothing but pain and darkness in her life. Narasimhaswami, recounting her life, says that she could not bear to even open her window, for if she did she would at once look upon the school where her daughter had passed several happy years of study. Echchammal began to go on pilgrimages to assuage her grief. She met many sages but none could help her. When she returned to her village in 1906 she was told about the silent young yogi on Mount Arunachala.

Echchammal came to Bhagavan at Virupaksha Cave in 1906. She stayed in the town since women were not allowed to stay at the cave after 6 p.m. On beholding Bhagavan the next day, she felt her bundle of sorrow drop. The memory of her husband and children no longer caused pain and bitterness. Later she adopted a girl, Chellammal, who tragically died sometime after giving birth to a boy named Ramana. In the words of Lord Krishna quoted by Narasimhaswami: “Whenever I wish to bless anyone, everything he calls his I snatch away from him.”¹

Every relationship Echchammal had as wife or mother was now replaced by the spiritual bond she formed with the Maharshi. In 1907 she started serving food to Bhagavan and thenceforth dedicated her life to his service.

Suri Nagamma was a child widow. She was orphaned when she was ten and widowed when she was eleven. Despite being a child who had not even matured, she was forced to lead the life of an orthodox Hindu widow — serving her family, practising austerities and reading sacred books. She felt that her very presence was inauspicious and hence shunned human contact. In her own words: “I was lying on the

¹ B.V.Narasimha Swami, *Self-Realization*. Reprint first edition, 1931. p.102. *Yasyanugraham ichchami tasya sarvam haramyaham*

floor all the time on a torn mat, my hand for a pillow and resembled a lizard clinging to the wall.”² She was illiterate and hence the enjoyment of reading was also denied to her. It was in 1913 that she had a vision of a sage in yogic posture to whom she would surrender everything. It was almost thirty years later that she discovered her guru in Bhagavan.

In 1918 she learnt to read and write Telugu at Bezawada from a literary minded lady, Indumati. Suri Nagamma used her newly acquired skills to pour forth her heart in 108 verses in a composition called *Manasa Shatakam*, essentially a catechism addressed to her own mind. When Nagamma moved to Vijayawada in order to pursue a life of meditation and reading, the women of the orthodox Brahmin community rebuked her, saying that she was unfit for a spiritual life for not shaving her head as all orthodox widows normally did. But Nagamma never shaved her head because she had before her the shining example of Tarikonda Venkatamba, the celebrated composer of *Venkatachala Mahatmyam*. This woman was a great saint who was also a child-widow and when her relatives tried to force her to shave her head, blood gushed out forcing them to stop. Of this story, another version says that when the newly-shaven Venkatamba emerged after the required dip in the river her hair had already grown down to her waist!

To help Nagamma get over her intense depression her brother suggested that she should make a short stay in Tiruvannamalai with her relative, Devulapalli Subbamma (Subbalakshmiamma) who was serving in the ashram kitchen. It was thus that in July 1941, she reached Ramanasramam after offering prayers at Kalahasti and Tirupati. She wrote that by the concentrated gaze from Bhagavan’s luminous eyes, all the ignorance of her mind was washed away at her very first meeting with him. She considered this to be her initiation and spontaneously composed eight verses called *Sharanagati* signifying her ‘surrender’ at his feet.

Suri Nagamma’s relative Subbalakshmiamma, who had preceded her to Ramanasramam, had a similar background of widowhood and destitution. Widowed at the age of sixteen she says that she was sent back to her mother’s house in Nellore to live as a widow should live. After

² Nagamma, Suri, *My Life at Sri Ramanasramam*, 1974. p. 1.

going on various pilgrimages Subbalakshmiamma was planning to settle down in Varanasi. However, her destiny took her to Ramanasramam, to be an assistant in the kitchen. Ramana also entrusted her with tasks such as making multiple handwritten copies of *Arunachala Ashtakam*.

Sampurnamma's life replicates that of Subbalakshmiamma closely. A childless widow, her life became an endless rigmarole of desolation and despair. The turning point in her life came while she was worshipping in Madurai. An old Brahmin came up to her and asked, "Won't you cook a meal for me?" She offered to take him to her home after worship but found, on her return from the temple, that he had vanished. In 1932 when she saw Sri Ramana she identified him with her vision. She took charge of the kitchen and was assisted by Sri Ramana himself. She says:

"The kitchen was small at that time and every time I needed to move I would go around him and take good care to have him on my right hand. Thus I would perform numerous *pradakshinams* during the day. Was he not my God? Was I not fortunate to have him in the very middle of my kitchen?"³

The stories of Lokamma, Shankamma, and Brihadambal are very similar. Brihadambal of Ramanathapuram summed it up neatly when she said, "Only *amangalis* (widows) come here, not *sumangalis* ('auspicious' married women)."⁴ What distinguished the lives of the Ramanasramam widows was their intense suffering, virtually an ordeal by fire, before they found refuge at the feet of Sri Ramana, and the immense spiritual joy and tranquility they found at Ramanasramam.

I conclude with the moving words of Subbalakshmiamma:

"Whoever has not experienced the ecstasy of grinding, the rapture of cooking, the joy of serving *iddlies* to devotees, the state when the mind is in the heart and the heart is in Him and He is in the work, cannot know how much bliss the human heart contains."⁵



³ *Ramana Smrti*, Part Two. 'Bhagavan in the Kitchen' by Sampurnamma.1980. Trans. G.Venkatachalam.

⁴ Interview dated 24.3.1994.

⁵ *Ramana Smrti*, op.cit., 'My Light, My Light' by Subbalakshmiamma.

VIDEO INTERVIEW

Sri Bhagavan
and My Father

T.K. RAMANA KUMAR

This video interview was recorded in May 2002. Sri T.K. Ramana Kumar passed away in September 2005. He was 62 years old.

My father Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami Iyer, was one of the staunchest devotees of Bhagavan, and named me as Ramana Kumar in order to always be aware of his name. My father began visiting Ramanasramam as a medical student with his friends while going on a picnic to Tiruvannamalai. My father was a good photographer and despite some initial objections he succeeded in taking numerous photos at Ramanasramam. Perhaps Chinnaswami objected, but Bhagavan himself permitted him. Even during a short stay of half a day, he was bent upon taking photos rather than hearing the teachings of Bhagavan. He said later that perhaps he had missed the cream of Bhagavan's teachings because of it. But he left a great file of Bhagavan's pictures in various postures.

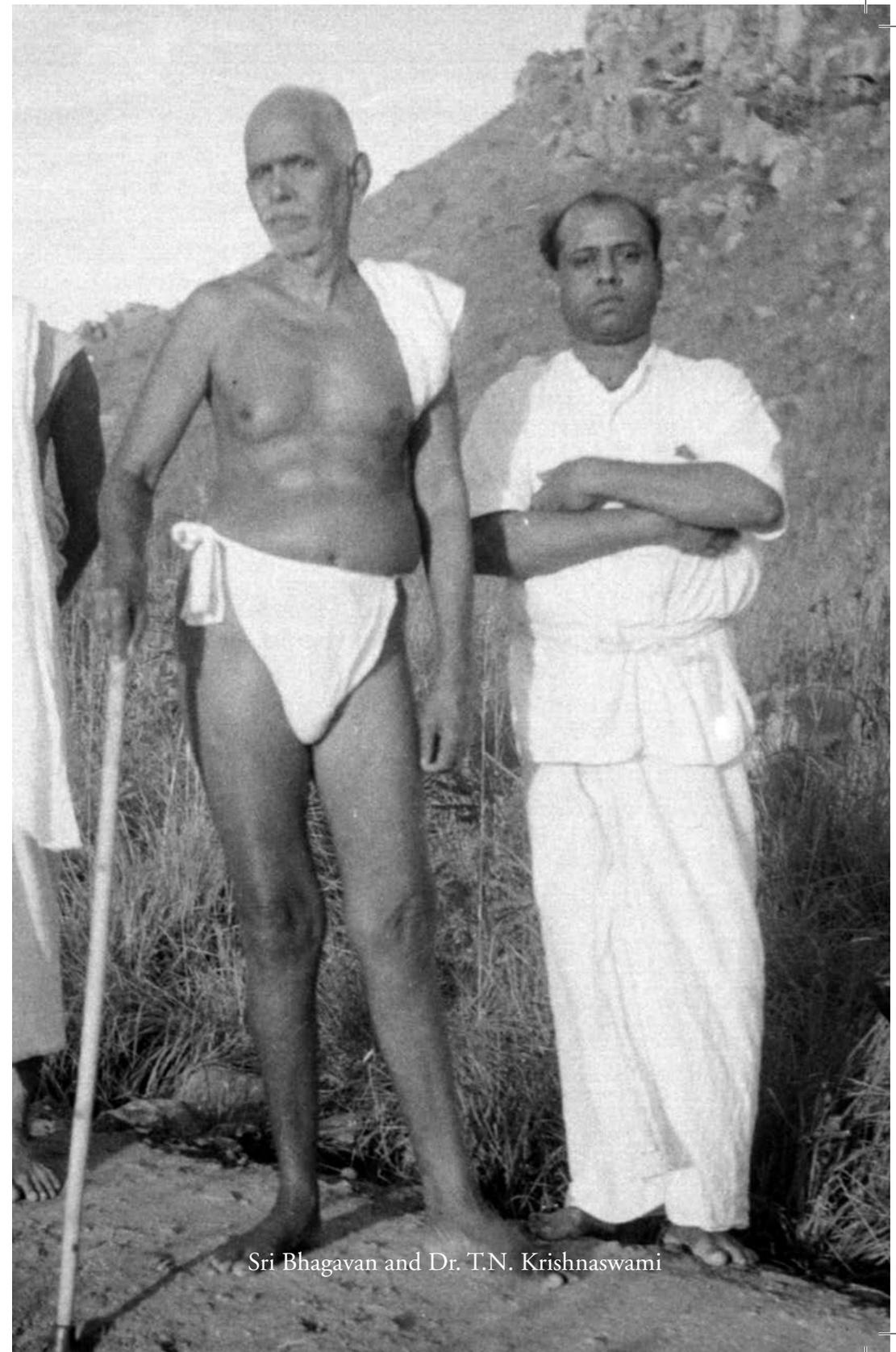
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My father never carried money in all his life. I would accompany him to Ramanansramam and would distribute cash to such as needed it, usually one rupee notes, but my father didn't bother. The family house in Mylapore, Chennai, was built by him and used to be the 'gateway' to Ramanasramam. People would stay in our house and then go to ashram to meet Bhagavan. For instance, Muruganar, the great poet and devotee, spent a lot of time here during his trips to Madras for the purpose of proof reading, printing, etc. Later we had a house at Tiruvannamalai which was exclusively made available for Muruganar's stay. I did not personally own any house at Tiruvannamalai.

I was only seven years old when Bhagavan left his mortal coil. When I was three or four years old, my mother accompanying my father would carry me to Ramanasramam. She would complain that Bhagavan never gave any *prasadam* to me as a child. Bhagavan's Grace however was always there. In the New Hall where the granite statue is now I would recite rhymes before Bhagavan. I witnessed once somebody who brought a basket full of mangoes to Bhagavan which he then distributed to the monkeys and squirrels. The gentleman who brought the mangoes felt bad because Bhagavan did not take even one of them. Bhagavan told him not to feel sorry. Once a gift is made, the receiver should be left free to do as he wishes with it. There should be no expectations.

When Bhagavan fell ill, my father visited the ashram three or four times a week not returning until about 2.30 a.m. the following morning. Even after Bhagavan's nirvana, my father would come to Ashram every month to attend meetings and court cases. T.N. Venkataraman also came to our house frequently to discuss legal matters and other difficulties. Yogi Ramaiah of Nellore would spend half his time in Tiruvannamalai and the rest in our house at Madras. Mrs Osborne, Kitty and Adam Osborne also regularly stayed at our house, as did Swami Ramanapadananda and Balarama Reddy.

One important event I wish to recall. It was during Bhagavan's final treatment when my father would visit the Ashram to dress his wounds. I was playing outside near the dining hall one day when Bhagavan came out of the dispensary. Jokingly he said, "Kutty [little] Doctor



Sri Bhagavan and Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami

is waiting.” At that time I didn’t pay much attention to this remark, but later, when I studied medicine and became a doctor myself, the words of Bhagavan hailing me as a doctor in the making, seemed a blessing to me to help others and fulfil myself in the medical profession.

Bhagavan never made a systematic study of the scriptures, but when his teachings were so strongly reflected in the scriptures which were presented to him, he remarked, “Oh, yes, what I experience personally is confirmed in the scriptures!” Although many spiritual giants travelled widely to spread the Upanishadic teachings including the Sankaracharyas, Bhagavan emphasised Self-knowledge through the practice of Self-enquiry and never left Arunachala where he arrived when at barely 17 years of age.

Once, in the presence of Bhagavan, my father had expressed a desire for a piece of Arunachala to be given to him to keep and cherish. Much later, Bhagavan handed a small stone from the hillside to my father, fulfilling this desire. Bhagavan added however, that it is Arunachala in its entirety that is sacred and that there is little point in picking up just one small piece.

My father carefully observed Bhagavan in all the various situations inside the ashram and he took photographs to record these events. For example, he knew Bhagavan was fond of children and took a photograph showing a small boy carrying Bhagavan’s walking stick and leading the way to illustrate this.

During the Ashram court case regarding the Will, Bhagavan was asked for his signature. But he said, “What do you want me to sign? One man is saying that I am Bhagavan, another says Ramana Maharshi. As which do I to put my signature?” However, on devotees entreaty, Bhagavan put a few dashes and the court authority attested it by adding a seal. This shows his practical approach to liberation of a *jivanmukta*, signifies that he was nameless and formless. There is no name, as what name did he have, aside from that which we gave him?

There is no instance to my knowledge of a major operation done without anaesthesia. At his request, Bhagavan was operated on without anaesthesia. Is this not a proof that he was a *jivanmukta*?

He had totally disassociated himself from the body. Does this not demonstrate that he had no bodily afflictions?

When Bhagavan’s end was near we were doing *puja* to him. That same night as we performed *aarathi*, a friend informed us that Bhagavan had dropped his body. My father was in the ashram.

I have got Bhagavan’s walking stick, *kamandalu* (water pot) and floor mat and continue to keep them in my puja room. The walking stick and *kamandalu* are carved with a silver handle. His floor mat is kept in a wooden box.

My father was conversant with books such as *Yoga Vasishtha* and the *Ramayana*. His approach to Bhagavan was totally different from that of others and he was mainly concerned with taking photographs of Bhagavan at various stages of his life, and within that one day he normally stayed at the ashram, and his whole attention was rivetted on Bhagavan’s form not on his words. My father was not concerned with infusing in me anything about Bhagavan, but I recollect some incidents. Even though Bhagavan had not been concerned about his body, my father studied his physical appearance and his mode of behaviour as he took photos at every opportunity which Bhagavan graciously allowed.

My father died in 1975 and my mother, three years earlier. I remember my mother saying that Bhagavan did not follow tradition in giving *vibhuti prasadam* at any time as a sign of his grace.

Our family house at Mylapore, Madras was a part of Ramanasramam and somebody would always come there for a meeting or discussion. Not a day passed without devotees getting together with my father. After Bhagavan’s nirvana my father became engaged in pertinent administrative matters of the ashram.

My father never did *giri pradakshina*. Nor did he go to the Arunachaleswar Temple in town. He was concerned only with Bhagavan, Arunachala and Ramanasramam. Even during Jayanthi or the Aradhana functions, he would be deep in discussion with T. N. Venkataraman, and only during *arathi* would he come out of the office. My father and K. K. Nambiar were pillars of the ashram administration, ever deeply loyal to the memory and influence of our revered and beloved Bhagavan. ▲



KEYWORD

Sadguru

JOHN GRIMES

The term *Sadguru* means a ‘true teacher, a perfect Master, a Self-realized spiritual guide’. The term comes from *Sat* = true, real + *guru* = teacher.¹ Such an individual is one with the Self. The term *guru* as an adjective literally means ‘weighty’, ‘large’, ‘heavy’, ‘great’.² In other words, a *guru* is great; a *guru* is one who is extremely great within; a *guru* is one who is large enough to contain the entire universe; a *guru* is the greatest of the great. For this reason such a one is called *mahan* (great). There are *gurus* and *gurus* in India. The term, when applied in everyday discourse, usually refers to a ‘teacher’ — the music *guru*, the dance *guru*, the school-teacher *guru*, and the spiritual *guru*, and so on. When the term *guru* is qualified by the prefix *sat*, it refers to a Self-realized *guru*. In Sri Ramana’s vocabulary, he generally used the term *guru*, to imply the true *guru*, the *sadguru*, someone who has realized the Self and who is able to use his power to assist others

¹ Grimes, John, *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy*, Indica Books, 2009. p 261.

² Monier-Williams, M., *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Motilal Banarsidass, 1999. p. 359.

John Grimes’s new book *Ramana Maharshi: Crown Jewel of Advaita* will soon be released by Indica Books, Varanasi.

towards the goal of Self-realization.³ In various places he said, “The *Guru* is the Self . . . God takes the form of a *Sadguru* and appears to the devotee and teaches him the Truth, and moreover, purifies his mind by association . . . a true *Guru* is one who is endowed with tranquility, patience, forgiveness, and other virtues, is capable of attracting others even with his eyes, who has a feeling of equality towards all.”⁴

The most oft-quoted ‘creative’ etymology of the word *guru* derives the word from the two syllables *gu* (which means darkness) and *ru* (remover). Thus, the *guru* is that one who removes the darkness of (the disciple’s) ignorance.⁵ Another etymology of the word says, “The first syllable *gu* represents the principle of illusion and the second syllable *ru* the supreme knowledge that destroys the illusion.”⁶ Other ‘creative’ etymologies include *gu* (beyond the qualities) and *ru* (devoid of form). The *guru* is the one who bestows the formless state that transcends the qualities.⁷ Or again, *gu* (to sound or speak) and *ru* (declaring the way to behave). Thus, the *guru* is the one who speaks the truth. Sankara describes the *guru* as: “One who by their Self-realization is to be equated with Truth.”⁸

The *guru tattva* or *guru* principle is often spoken of as existing at two levels. According to Sri Ramana, the *guru* is both inner and outer. The outer *guru* is God in human form and, simultaneously, the inner *guru* is the Self in the Heart of each devotee. The outer *guru* gives instructions and by his power enables the devotee to keep his attention on the Self while the inner *guru* pulls the devotee’s mind back to its source, absorbs it in the Self, and finally destroys it. Sri Ramana said: “The *Guru* is both external and internal. From the exterior he gives a push to the mind to turn it inwards. From the interior he pulls the mind towards the Self and helps in the quieting

³ Venkataraman, T.N. (pub.), *Maharshi’s Gospel*, Book I, ‘Guru and His Grace’, 2000. p. 26.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁵ *Guru-gita*, verse 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, verse 24.

⁷ *Ibid.*, verse 46.

⁸ *Vivekacudamani*, verse 8.

of the mind. That is the *Guru’s* grace. There is *no difference* between God, *Guru*, and the Self.”⁹

A basic teaching of Ramana is that a *guru* is absolutely indispensable for virtually everyone who is striving for Self-realization. He said, “The *Guru* is absolutely necessary. The *Upanishads* say that none but a *Guru* can take a man out of the jungle of the intellect and sense-perceptions. So there must be a *Guru*.”¹⁰ Which raises the question in many seeker’s minds, ‘but you never had a *guru* (at least in human form)’ to which Sri Ramana replied:

“That depends on what you call a *Guru*. He need not necessarily be in the human form. Dattatreya had twenty-four *Gurus*, including the elements, etc. That means that every form in the world was his *Guru*. A *Guru* is absolutely necessary . . . I might have had a *Guru* sometime or other. And didn’t I sing hymns on Arunachala? What is a *Guru*? God appears to a seeker in some form or other, human or non-human, to guide as *Guru* in answer to his prayer and according to his need.”¹¹

History has recorded a few cases where there was no *guru*, i.e., Vamadeva, Suka, Gautama the Buddha — but such instances are so rare that they validate the saying, ‘the exception proves the rule’.

The *guru’s* help is negative in the sense that nothing is given; only the non-existent delusion of the seeker is removed. It is like a person that wakes up on seeing a lion in their dream. Even as the person wakes up at the mere sight of the lion, so too will a person wake up from the sleep of ignorance into the wakefulness of true knowledge through the *guru’s* benevolent look of grace. Yet, the *guru* does not bring about Self-realization. He simply removes the obstacles to it as the Self is always realized.

A devotee once remarked: “All books say that the guidance of a *Guru* is necessary.” Sri Ramana responded: “The *Guru* will say only what I am saying now. He will not give you anything you have not already. It is impossible for anyone to get what he has not got already. Even if he gets any such thing, it will go as it came. What comes will

⁹ Venkataramiah, M., *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 1996. §198, p. 165.

¹⁰ Cohen, S.S., *Guru Ramana*, 2006. p. 69.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.69.

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also go. What always is will alone remain. The *Guru* cannot give you anything new, which you have not already. Removal of the notion that we have not realized the Self is all that it is required. We are always the Self. Only, we don't realize it."¹²

If the *Sadguru* is the grace-bestowing power of the Absolute, what the *guru* bestows is *darshan*; it provides the seeker with a direct personal experience or glimpse of the Self, embodied. It is the *Sadguru's* spiritual power which radiates from, and is transmitted by the *guru* and which awakens the disciple's own inner power. Obviously, as both tradition and the texts reveal, the *guru* plays a major role in both Bhagavan's teaching and Vedanta. And yet, even if one intellectually understands that one is the Self, the senses still lead one astray. One needs some instrument, some device, whereby one can overcome the pull and tyranny of the senses. That instrument is the *Sadguru*.

For the *guru* to awaken the disciple there must be a link between them. This link is called grace (*anugraha*). It is like the wire that connects the powerhouse with the light bulb that shines in one's home. Or the original flame that can then light an infinite number of candles without diminishing itself. Sri Ramana remarked, "Grace is the Self... One's remembrance (of the *Guru*) is the forerunner of grace. That is the response, that is the stimulus, that is the Self, and that is grace."¹³ The *Taittiriya Upanisad* says, "The teacher is the first letter; the student is the last letter; knowledge is the meeting place; instruction is the link."¹⁴

To the question as to how to find the right *guru*, Sri Ramana responded, "God, who is immanent, in his grace takes pity on the loving devotee and manifests himself according to the devotee's development. The devotee thinks that he is a man and expects a relationship between two physical bodies. But the Guru who is God or the Self incarnate works from within, helping man to see the error of his ways and guides him on the right path until he realizes the Self within."¹⁵ ▲

¹² Mudaliar, D., *Day by Day*, 2002. 16-9-45 Afternoon, p.18.

¹³ Venkataramiah, M., *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 1996. §251, p.208.

¹⁴ *Taittiriya Upanishad* 1.3.3.

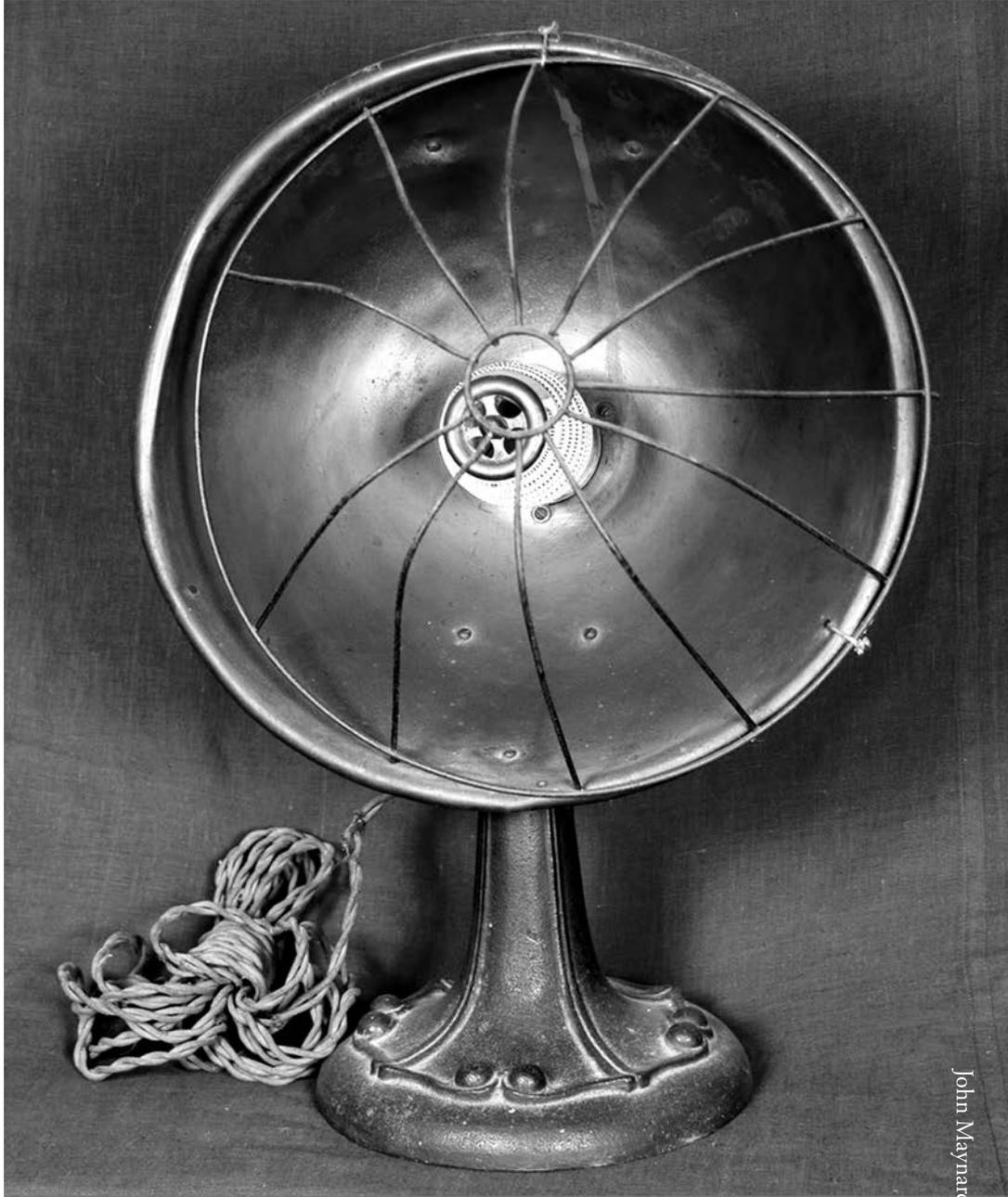
¹⁵ Venkararaman, T.N., (pub.), *Maharshi's Gospel*, pp. 36-37.

POEM

Arunachala Siva!

Ana Callan

He first heard a line
in his head as he woke,
but kept going. Next
day, it still spoke
but now louder,
almost a song
swirling inside him.
So as he strolled
he wove a garland,
sweet hymns of Heaven
for his Master,
the chorus of which
would ring through
Tiruvannamalai,
and years later,
that refrain he would hear
singing back to him
through the door
as he lay on his death bed,
only hours left of his breath
enchancing the air,
and he wept in joy
as he drank the tune he had given
now coming back for him
on the wind
on the hill
on the lungs
of all who loved him.



John Maynard

Archives Collection: Electric Heater

Ulladu Narpadu

Based on Lakshmana Sarma's
Commentary

Verse Twenty Seven

S. RAM MOHAN

Verse 27 to verse 29 of Ulladu Narpadu, delineates the idea of 'Enquiry of the real Self'. Enquiry generally means scrutiny or investigation into something. It is an intellectual process using the tool of logical inference, at times based on evidence (*pramana*), which results in the acquisition of indirect knowledge of the subject. But the inferential process is ineffective in knowing the Self — we seek to know something beyond our intellectual faculties. Bhagavan advises us to make the mind one-pointed by a powerful resolve, turning it inwards to seek the source from where the mind or ego arises and abide in It. The knowledge thereby obtained is called direct knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*). It is the knowledge of the present, beyond space and time. Phenomenal knowledge is termed as *paroksha jnana*.

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Since the world, which is the expanded manifestation of the ego, obscures the Self and prevents its being experienced, the appropriate *sadhana* that facilitates knowledge of the Self and extinguishes the ego is explained in the following verse.

Verse 27

The state in which the ego does not arise is the state in which we are 'That' [Self]. Without seeking the place [source] wherefrom the ego arises, how can we achieve the loss [annihilation] of individual existence [wherein the ego arises not]? And if we do not attain the state [of egolessness], how can we abide in that state [which is our natural state] by which we are That, where everything is experienced as the Self?

Commentary

Bhagavan states that the true state of our being is that in which the ego does not rise up. The ego will not perish unless we discover its origin. If it does not perish, how can we experience the unity of Existence — the knowledge that everything is the expression of the Self?

This verse, like the first invocatory verse, needs a detailed study. The first sentence in the verse, 'The state in which the ego does not arise, is the state in which we are That', is a summation of all that has been taught before. If the ego arises in the form of the 'I', it is from that the world will arise, and will obscure the truth of the real Self. Therefore, the unconstrained effulgence of that Self is the egoless state.

Bhagavan says that we are always 'That', the *Brahman* or the Self. It is our natural state. But that state is prevented from being experienced, by the super-imposition of the world-appearance. In the waking and dream state, the 'I' arises in the form of the ego, and obscures the Real from being experienced as the shining Self. In deep sleep, the ego recedes into its seed-form and exists in the form of ignorance. Thus, all the three states are obstacles to the experience of the Self and perpetuate the cycle of *samsara*. Their basis and support is the primordial ignorance (*avidya*). The state in which this basis of the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep) no longer exists, is

known as the fourth state or supreme state (*turiya*). This is the only true state. This supreme state, is described in the Vedas as the one state from which words turn back along with the mind, not attaining it.

The mind and words ultimately are inadequate to think or describe it. The Upanishads make a compromise by hinting at It by the words 'Not this, Not that' (*neti, neti*). This is conveyed by Lord Dakshinamurthi by means of silence. All enjoyments that can be had in the state of ignorance — including the pleasures of heaven — cannot be compared to it. The fundamental distinction that marks this state of bliss is that it is the *egoless state*, meaning that the mind which is the expanded and manifested ego, and the worlds created by the mind, are absent. It is not a state of void but of perfect bliss.

When does the ego cease to rise? How to extinguish it, so that it will not arise anymore? The answer to this is given in the second sentence of the verse, 'Without seeking the place [source] wherefrom the ego arise, how can we achieve the loss of individual existence [wherein the ego arises not]?' So long as the mind does not turn inwards pursuing the quest for the source or origin of ego, the ego will persist and expand as the world and thus prevent the attainment of that state of bliss.

We cannot attain that state of bliss, if we do not bring about the state of egolessness, is stated in the third sentence of the verse: 'If we do not attain that state [of egolessness], how can we abide in that State [which is our natural state] in which we are that, where everything is experienced as the Self?'. By the words 'our natural state in which we are That', it has been shown that the supreme state is our own fundamental nature. Hence it is referred to as the natural state, or *sahaja sthiti*.

The term of 'loss of individuality' refers to the spiritual evolution from the state of an individual (which is the result of ignorance) to the state of bliss, where no borders or limiting adjuncts exist.

Interestingly, the term of 'loss of individuality' (*thannizhappu* in Tamil) is used in *Ozhivilodukkam* at the very beginning in verse two. It states that the loss of individuality is achieved by the very act of meditation on the guru when all the mental activities cease

MOUNTAIN PATH

immediately. The author, Kazhi Kannudaiya Vallalar compares it to an elephant, which becomes totally motionless and silently transfixed when in a dream it sees a lion. Likewise, the true disciple achieves that state of loss of individuality and abidance in the Self by meditation on the guru.

By this *sadhana* the mind is turned inwards and plunged into the Heart. The final annihilation of the mind (*mano nasam*), attained through grace, is the supreme state. Bhagavan explains elsewhere that while other types of spiritual practices are helpful in obtaining temporary latency of the mind, they do not lead to the supreme state. Just as the deep sleep, where the mind is temporarily absent, does not give us the supreme state, so too the other means of causing a latent state of the mind do not give us the state of bliss. The mind, with firm resolve, must be turned inwards and plunged into its place of origin, the Heart, through Self-enquiry in the waking state.

In sum, our true personality is the Atman or Self. When you intuitively know it, you realize that there is naught but the Self. What stands between you and realizing your true state is the ego, which, after rising from the Self, poses as a separate entity and manifests as intellect, mind and body, as well as the world. As long as the ego is there, it will not allow you to know the infinite Self. When you transcend the ego, you attain your true state, that of bliss. When the ego disintegrates completely the 'realised one' is permanently dwelling in the Self. Thereafter, the other states of existence — waking, dreaming and deep sleep — will be experienced as mere waves on the immense surface of the Atman. This is called the natural (*sahaja*) state in which Bhagavan has always lived. ▲

Cold Feet

Part One

An interpretation of Carl Jung's behaviour in India and his subsequent written explanations as to why he did not visit Sri Ramanasramam.

The original source of this article will be available in the future at www.invisibledoc.org

WASYL NIMENKO

In late autumn 1937, Carl Jung travelled to India at the invitation of the British government to attend celebrations of the University of Calcutta, where he would be awarded an honorary degree. Earlier in the same year he had received two visitors from India: V. Subramanya Iyer, spiritual adviser to the Maharajah of Mysore, and his student, Paul Brunton, author of *A Search in Secret India*.¹ This meeting may have stimulated his desire to visit this ancient land of wisdom. Jung

¹ Brunton, Paul, *A Search in Secret India*, London: Rider & Co., 1934.

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had also become aware of Sri Ramana through his friend, the great Indologist Heinrich Zimmer who wrote a book *The Way to 'the Self'*² in which Sri Ramana figured prominently. Though we do not know for sure, it is likely that Jung considered the idea he should meet Sri Ramana who was seen at that time as an exemplary person who transcended the limitations of identification with the body and mind and immersed himself in the *atman*, 'the Self'. He was a recognised phenomenon and therefore the question as to why Jung didn't meet the sage is worth examining.

Jung sailed from Marseille and landed in Bombay. He visited Delhi, the Taj Mahal, Sanchi, Allahabad, Varanasi and then onto Calcutta. The Himalayas near Darjeeling impressed him deeply. He also visited the sacred sun temple at Konarak in Orissa. He was hospitalised for ten days in Calcutta due to a bout of dysentery and after recovery, sailed to Madras and thence onto Colombo where he explored the Buddhist temple of Kandy and nearby Buddhist ruins. After a stay at Trivandrum he returned to Europe. The journey stimulated his groundbreaking study of alchemy, which he had been struggling with for years. He began to make sense of the deliberate archane language the alchemists employed bearing on the creation, not of material gold but the soul. He became so absorbed in this new alchemical approach that he never left the ship at Bombay on the return leg.

During his travels in India Jung could not but be aware of Sri Ramana, particularly during his stay in nearby Madras. And he could not avoid making a decision whether to see Sri Ramana even if it meant deliberately not addressing the opportunity. Jung had borrowed his fundamental idea of 'the Self' from the east and especially the Upanishads, of which Sri Ramana was a living exemplar. Jung was at the time not only one of the world's most influential psychiatrists but also a leading intellectual light in bringing the wisdom of the East to Europe, and his proposed interaction with or comments on Sri Ramana are still important today.

² Zimmer, Heinrich, *Der Weg zum Selbst: The Way to 'the self'. Lehre und Leben des indischen heiligen Shri Ramana Maharshi aus Tiruvannamalei*. Zurich: Rascher, 1954.

His comments about Sri Ramana can probably be best understood by reflecting on the origins of Jung's mental state which sheds new light on why he didn't visit Sri Ramana. *With this new insight we will argue that the actual reason for Jung not visiting Sri Ramana is quite different from the reasons he gave at the time.*

In his essay, *The Holy Men of India*,³ Jung gave a confusing picture of Sri Ramana, which also contains a degree of ambivalence. My research has led to the hypothesis that Jung was not just hesitant towards Sri Ramana but actually duplicitous. If we learn more about the people who knew Jung and his own later writing this should enable us to penetrate Jung's defences and reveal the truth about why he deliberately avoided Sri Ramana and then tried to conceal it.

One apparent obstacle to a right understanding is that Jung, who was without any doubt an extraordinarily intelligent man, suffered from prolonged mental illness. At first it seems difficult to understand him but this is really only because he concealed so very much about himself in the *Holy Men of India* and in his autobiography. However, Jung left a trail of evidence in his other later correspondence. My criterion to try and understand Jung is rather like trying to understand a multifaceted precious stone. The only way to understand it is to see the different qualities of each facet. Perhaps this approach will enable us to not judge Jung but understand him and his legacy and why he behaved the way he did.

Jung's early childhood experiences had a profound effect on him. He came from a deeply religious family. His mother was the daughter of a theologian and his father was a pastor. Two of his paternal uncles and eight of his maternal uncles were ministers in the Protestant church. But Jung's family environment was very troubled and his mother had serious and enduring mental health problems. Today the child Jung would be on the 'at risk' register for children.⁴

³ *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Vol 11*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1969, p.576.

⁴ Jung, C.J., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffe. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. p. 23.

“Jung’s mother had a nervous breakdown when he was three years old which resulted in a long separation while she recovered in hospital. Later, he suffered a series of anxiety dreams whose terrors would frequently wake him in the night. He also described visual hallucinations similar to those experienced by schizophrenics in a psychotic episode.”⁵

When he was a young boy he had already begun rebelling against Christianity. In his autobiography Jung described an important fantasy when he was eleven or twelve. This seems to be the first evidence of his rejection of Christianity.

“I saw before me the cathedral, the blue sky. God sits on his golden throne, high above the world and from under the throne an enormous turd falls upon the sparkling new roof, shatters it and breaks the walls of the cathedral asunder.

“It was as though I had experienced an illumination. A great many things I had not previously understood became clear to me. That was what my father had not understood, I thought; he had failed to experience the will of God, had opposed it for the best reasons and out of the deepest faith. And that was why he had never experienced the miracle of grace which heals all and makes all comprehensible. He had taken the bible’s commandments as his guide.”⁶

Although this seems to be Jung just rejecting Christianity, it is also the first rejection of a male father figure whom he looked up to. This was to happen twice more. In one of his letters to Freud who had become his mentor, Jung admitted that he was traumatised as a boy by a middle aged close friend of the family whom he worshiped.⁷

Freud neither acknowledged this sensitively written and surprising confession, nor validated Jung’s trauma, which might have been the first step in healing Jung’s area of obvious distress. Freud demonstrated an appalling lack of compassion. Jung’s reaction is unknown but knowing how sensitive he was he would probably have been

⁵ Brome, Vincent, *Jung: Man and Myth*. London: Macmillan, 1978. p.301.

⁶ Jung, C.J., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. op.cit., pp.56-57.

⁷ McGuire, Williman, (ed), *The Freud/Jung letters*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974. pp.94-95.

disappointed and perhaps began to see that Freud, like his father and the trusted abuser, was flawed.

Jung had looked up to Freud not just as a father figure but almost like a god-like father. His acrimonious split with Freud after their last meeting on 8th September 1913 resulted in a four year period between 1914-1918 of mental illness which he describes as a psychotic breakdown. During his illness Jung had a vision which he interpreted as being prophetic and not psychotic.

“Towards the autumn of 1913, the pressure which I had felt was in *me* seemed to be moving outwards, as though there was something in the air. The atmosphere actually seemed to me darker than it had been. I saw a monstrous flood covering all the northern and low-lying lands between the North Sea and the Alps. When I came up to Switzerland I saw that the mountains grew higher and higher to protect our country. I realised that a frightful catastrophe was in progress. I saw the mighty yellow waves, the floating rube of civilisation, and the drowning bodies of countless thousands. Then the whole sea turned to blood. The vision lasted about one hour.”⁸

Jung chose to interpret the dream as a precognition of the First World War when it was, in psychiatric terms, a psychotic episode. Jung was operating the simple defence mechanism of intellectualising what had happened. But surprisingly he took this even further because he began to think that his special insight and his understanding of the unconscious processes enabled him to prophesy the future.

My psychotherapy teacher at Oxford, Anthony Storr, interviewed Jung on 14th April 1951. Storr was a respected English psychiatrist and author who was well known for his piercingly accurate psychoanalytical portraits of historical figures. He was convinced that Jung’s experience during this four year period was a severe and prolonged psychotic illness:

“Although I wrote earlier that I did not accept R.D Laing’s theory that psychosis is a path to higher wisdom, there are a few cases of rather acute episodes of psychotic illness from which the patient emerges

⁸ Jung, C.J., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. op.cit., p199.

changed and perhaps enriched, and this sequence of events appears to be particularly common in those who become gurus because the revelation which enriches them forms the basis of their subsequent teaching. Jung certainly suffered from hallucinations and episodes of depersonalisation.”⁹

A large part of Jung’s four year mental illness and recovery involved healing and re-inventing himself. This obviously meant developing a functioning ego which was acceptable to the wider world. In his healing, Jung strived to achieve meaning. His salvation was to develop his own theory of reality known as Analytical Psychology. He had broken away not only from his father’s religion, but also from Freud. His life and work was an attempt to find a substitute for religion, a secular form of salvation, and perhaps from the distress of his parent’s wounds. He understood all too well the fact that ‘what is not resolved will be repeated’.

Storr said that when he met and interviewed him, Jung believed that he was a prophet and a guru. Storr was fascinated by gurus and in his book *Feet of Clay*, he examines with humane insight several gurus such as Georgei Gurdjieff, Rudolph Steiner, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Jung, Sigmund Freud, Ignatius Loyola, and Paul Brunton. He is particularly explicit that Jung was a guru.

“ ‘What I’m writing now,’ he told me ‘is pure poison. But I owe it to my people.’ I was taken aback by this remark at the time, for I knew that no ordinary psychiatrist would talk like that of ‘my people’: that is the statement of a guru. Jung’s disciples might be few, but he had no doubts about his position.”¹⁰

Jung’s behaviour as a prophetic guru would have made it very difficult if not impossible for him to meet Sri Ramana, who as a genuine guru would have called into question, albeit in silence, Jung’s claim to be someone with the special abilities of an authentic guru.

It seems that Jung only intellectually understood Sri Ramana’s practice of Self enquiry resulting in the displacement of the ego by

⁹ Storr, Anthony, *Feet of Clay. A study of Gurus*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1996. p.91.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.96.

the *atman* ‘the Self’. Jung argued that Sri Ramana might not have transcended his ego.

“The goal of Eastern religious practice is the same as that of Western mysticism: the shifting of the centre of gravity from the ego to ‘the self’, from man to God. This means that the ego disappears in ‘the self’ and man in God. It is evident that Shri Ramana has either really been more or less absorbed by ‘the self’, or has at least struggled earnestly all his life to extinguish his ego in it.”¹¹

Jung’s error was to question Sri Ramana’s state by using psychological analysis, for psychology is a subject limited to the study of the mind. What Sri Ramana practically demonstrated transcends psychology because the *atman* is beyond the mind. Jung admits this in his own way.

“The equation self=God is shocking to the Europeans. As Shri Ramana’s statements and many others show, it is a specifically Eastern insight, to which psychology has nothing further to say except that it is not within its competence to differentiate between the two. Psychology can only establish that the empiricism of the ‘self’ exhibits a religious symptomatology, just as does that category of assertions associated with the term ‘God’.”¹²

Jung says that his own field of psychology is not competent to understand the *atman* in which Sri Ramana was merged. But what Jung doesn’t say is equally important. Jung never admits that he made any attempt to merge himself in the *atman* as Sri Ramana did. In fact, he disparaged the notion that the loss of ego was either crucial or even feasible. This may explain, in part, why he deliberately avoided meeting Sri Ramana. Jung was in some way the complete opposite to Sri Ramana because he was a man of the mind, of expansive thinking and of new ideas. Jung believed we should have what he called a healthy ego using mythology, archetypes, dream analysis and psychoanalysis to bring about Self-Individuation as he calls it. His thinking mind was everything to

¹¹ *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Vol 11*, op.cit., Para 958.

¹² *Ibid.*, Para 957.

him. Jung literally spoke volumes about this in his *Collected Works* and in his correspondence.

It is highly unlikely that Jung ever tried to actually practise Sri Ramana's Self-enquiry and perhaps he never even entertained the thought of doing this because it involved ignoring his ego, which would have been threatening to his new intellectual belief system and secular form of salvation.

I suspect that Jung probably couldn't have afforded another long episode of psychosis and that most likely, he got cold feet about meeting Sri Ramana. He had built up not just a reputation but a whole international following of disciples, with him as the guru of a new age psychology. This was the glue that held his ego together. With his history Jung wasn't going to lose that sense of certainty again. On a broader level, another interpretation could be that Jung *swadharma* was to reveal in the powerful myths of Western civilisation the means for redemption and any interaction with Sri Ramana may have interfered with his chosen destiny.

Sri Ramana's message could be seen as a simple and practical way of immersion in the 'the Self,' without all the apparatus of the new intellectual Analytical psychology Jung described. In the early days of psychology, Jung stated that he wasn't the sort of man to support anything he hadn't discovered himself. In his autobiography this is the fundamental reason for him taking a stand against the 'holy men' in India.

"I studiously avoided all so-called 'holy men'. I did so because I had to make do with my own truth, not accept from others what I could not attain on my own. I would have felt it as a theft had I attempted to accept their truth for myself."¹³

Jung was very serious about deliberately avoiding the 'holy men' especially one who may jeopardise his life's work. He seemed closed to anyone else's vision of the truth. This is in keeping with Anthony Storr's assessment of him being a guru. One could postulate that Jung was not only arrogant and rigid about truth but also about what he claimed to actually know.

¹³ *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, op.cit., p.305.

Although Jung referred to his ideas as a subjective confession and said that he did not want to force them on others, there is no doubt that he believed that he had privileged access to a realm beyond consciousness. When John Freeman interviewed Jung he asked him: "Do you believe in God?" Jung famously replied: 'Now? Difficult to answer. I *know*. I don't need to believe. I know.' When talking about dreams Jung said to me: 'Every night you have the chance of the Eucharist'; and I have been told that the coterie of close disciples who knew him well waited hopefully every morning to hear if the great man had had another significant message from the unconscious."¹⁴

There is another person I knew, who like myself, had an indirect connection with Jung and this was a long term Dutch resident of Tiruvannamalai, Hamsananda J.J.de Reede or Hamsa as he was known. His mentor, Dr Gualthernus Mees was a Dutch sociologist and a friend of Jung. I remember well our first conversation in the early 1980s.

"You told me that a friend of yours knew Jung very well.'

'Yes. I was tortured in a POW camp in Java during the Second World War and was brought to the mountain to recover by another Dutch man called Dr Mees. Jung stayed at Dr Mees's house in Trivandrum during his visit to India. Jung kept in touch with Dr Mees after returning to Europe.'

'Why do you think Jung didn't visit Tiruvannamalai?'

'Well... apparently there was a lot of thought that he may have been overcome by Ramana, by his authenticity. You see Jung was a mystic and Ramana was "an ordinary man". Jung was fundamentally a psychological guru and a mystic.'

Curiously Jung is very critical of Sri Ramana in his letter to Dr Mees. Like Zimmer, Dr Mees strongly encouraged Jung to visit Sri Ramana but was probably left surprised and disappointed by Jung's avoidant behaviour. In his letter to Mees, Jung refers to Raman Pillai, who wasn't a disciple of Sri Ramana. It is very uncharacteristic of Jung to get such an important detail wrong but what is worse is that he doesn't seem to care and just rationalises it by a sweeping generalisation.

¹⁴ *Feet of Clay. A study of Gurus*, op.cit., p.97.

“I’m sorry that I was under the impression when we met in Trivandrum that you introduced your friend Raman Pillai as a remote pupil of Shri Ramana. This however doesn’t matter very much, since the basic coincidence of most of the Indian teaching is so overwhelmingly great that it means little whether the author is called Ramakrishna or Vivekananda or Shri Aurobindo, etc.”¹⁵

Jung not only generalises, which reveals his lack of understanding of the subtleties of Indian spirituality, he repeatedly uses the excuse that Sri Ramana was just the same as any other Indian teacher to explain why he avoided meeting him.

“For the fact is, I doubt his uniqueness; he is of a type which always was and will be. Therefore it was not necessary to seek him out. I saw him all over India, in the pictures of Ramakrishna, in Ramakrishna’s disciples, in Buddhist monks, in innumerable other figures of the daily Indian scene, and the words of his wisdom are the *sous-entendu* of India’s spiritual life.”¹⁶

Jung vindicates his decision not to meet Sri Ramana by saying that Raman Pillai had surpassed Sri Ramana Maharshi, and that nothing better could have happened to Jung by meeting him.

“Be that as it may, in this modest, kindly, devout, and childlike spirit I encountered a man who had absorbed the wisdom of the Maharshi with utter devotion, and at the same time had surpassed his master, notwithstanding his cleverness and holiness, he had ‘eaten’ the world. I acknowledge with deep gratitude this meeting with him; nothing better could have happened to me. The man who is only wise and only holy interests me about as much as the skeleton of a rare saurian” (a lizard).¹⁷

In his letter to Dr Mees, Jung seems not to know much, if anything, about Sri Ramana’s teachings.

“I wonder wherein his self-realization consists and what he actually did do. We know this running away business from parents etc. with

¹⁵ Letter from C.G. Jung to Gualthernus H. Mees, Sept. 15, 1947. *C.G. Jung: Letters*, ed. Gerhard Adler. Princeton, 1973. Vol. I, p. 477.

¹⁶ *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Vol 11*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1969. para. 952.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 953.

our saints, too! But some of them have done something tangible – if it was only a crusade or something like a book or the Canto di Sole. I had a chance, when I was in Madras, to see the Maharshi, but by that time I was so imbued with the overwhelming Indian atmosphere of irrelevant wisdom and with the obvious Maya of this world that I didn’t care anymore if there had been twelve Maharshis on top of each other.”¹⁸

In evaluating this sharp retort of Jung’s, one can make the argument that after the energetic tour of north India which had profoundly affected him, along with his recent illness, Jung was so overloaded with intense impressions that he could not absorb more for fear of jeopardising his hard won balance. He was in a state of rebellion and retreated into an intense study of Western alchemy fueled by the insights he had gained during the trip.

In conclusion, Jung’s wonder at who Sri Ramana was in *The Holy Men of India* is essential in understanding Jung’s ambivalent comments about the sage of Arunachala because it is the only time Jung openly admits he doesn’t understand Sri Ramana at all. This is compelling evidence to infer that Jung’s approach to the Vedantic understanding of the *atman* was purely intellectual and inadequate.

Jung’s hazy intellectual grasp of Sri Ramana’s immersion in the Self is important to understand because Jung was misguided by fear of a mental breakdown. The Eastern realization is that the *atman*, ‘the Self’ is *Sat Chit Ananda* (being - consciousness - bliss) and can only be understood by direct practical experience. Yet Jung talks about Realization of the Self in the same way someone who has never flown a plane describes what a plane looks like and what it does but ultimately has neither the urge nor the competence to fly it. It appears that he could not have afforded to try and experience the naked realization of the Self as bliss-consciousness-being, for fear of a relapse into a psychotic illness similar to the one after his traumatic split with Freud.

We shall see in Part Two the role of Paul Brunton, who may have influenced Jung’s decision not to visit Sri Ramanasramam. ▲

¹⁸ *Op.cit.*, Letter from C.G. Jung to Gualthernus H. Mees, Sept. 15, 1947.



D. Thyagarajan

The Principle of Consciousness

Descartes' *Cogito Ergo Sum*,
Bhagavan and the Upanisadic
Tradition

S. MOHAN

*Sarvam Thath Prajnanetram Prajnane Prathistitam Prajnanetro
Lokaha Prajna Prathista Prajnanam Brahma*

All these are guided by consciousness and are supported by consciousness. The universe has consciousness for its guide. Consciousness is the basis or stay of all. Verily consciousness (*Prajnanam*) is *Brahman*. — *Aitareya Upanishad 5.3*

Consciousness as Brahman

The word Consciousness is used in Western thought to represent two slightly different concepts. The first version is a state of existence or being that is free of any definitive action or process. The other version defines the state of wakefulness. Scientists, including

Sundararajan Mohan, electrical engineer, and his wife Nirmala Mohan, educationist, were introduced to Bhagavan and his teachings by her father, Sri V.N. Srinivasa Rao. They are researching the unity of world philosophical thought and practice and share their findings in the blog <http://advaitananda-mohan.blogspot.com/>

psychologists, use the term to represent the wakeful state. The states of dreaming, deep sleep, meditation, telepathy, clairvoyance, etc. are often described as 'states of consciousness'. Freud used terms such as sub-conscious, unconscious etc. Indian thought, however, uses the word Consciousness purely to represent an inner state of being or awareness. Indian thought calls this Consciousness by either of two names in Sanskrit, as *Pragna* and *Chit*.

So in referring to Indian philosophical thought if one were to talk of Self-Consciousness then one is talking of Awareness of the Self. This aspect of one's personality is constant and existent in all conditions of the human being, that is, waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Similarly it is present when one is in touch with the outside world of objects through the senses, as also in the condition of mental withdrawal such as deep meditation and concentration. This constant awareness or consciousness is none other than *Brahman*. Vedanta states categorically that when the consciousness is involved with the outside world and identifies with it then it is a state of ignorance or *avidya*.

When the consciousness is detached from its habitual state of involvement with the outside world then it is possible for it to realize its true nature of effulgence and certitude as *Brahman*.

It is this identity of consciousness as *Brahman* as elucidated in the *Aitreya Upanishad* that is the subject matter of investigation by Rene Descartes of France as also Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharishi.

Rene Descartes (1596 -1650)

Descartes is considered as one of the first Western philosophers to evolve a rational thesis regarding the existence of God. He is also celebrated as a keen mathematician who developed a link between algebra and geometry, called the Cartesian Co-ordinate System.

Coming from a Catholic family, his early schooling was at a prestigious Jesuit school where he received his grounding in the Catholic faith, including a detailed understanding of Aristotle as well as mathematics. He studied law in Paris, but unlike his father, who was a judge, Descartes enlisted in the Army and appears to have travelled around Europe extensively. It was during this period in his early

twenties, when located in Germany, that he had a flash of philosophical illumination and formulated a regime of self-study for himself.

Social life and its graces lost fascination for him, and seeking quietitude, he moved to Holland and generally devoted himself to intense study. Descartes finally published two important works, *Discourse on the Method for Conducting One's Reason Well and for Searching for Truth in the Sciences* in French in 1637, and *Meditations on First Philosophy* in Latin in 1641.¹

Both the above treatises are in the form of a detailed enquiry into the nature of Truth and seek to answer the question 'Who am I?' He commences with an analysis of what he perceives through his sense organs. He uses an example of a piece of wax which is heated to prove that although the physical wax might melt and change in appearance and smell, his mind still perceives it as wax.² He points to one's perception of the sun as a small object on the basis of one's sight but shows that careful astronomical considerations would prove that the sun is many times larger than the earth.³ He states, "Thus what I thought I had seen with my eyes, I actually grasped solely with the faculty of judgement, which is in my mind."⁴ He concludes, "I now know that even bodies are not, properly speaking, perceived by the senses or by the faculty of imagination, but by the intellect alone, and that they are not perceived through their being touched or seen, but only through their being understood."⁵ Descartes is conscious of an underlying understanding or judgement that all the objects he sees and perceives, exist and indeed, by inference proves his own existence.⁶

He finds continuity between his own dreaming and wakeful states and posits that the mental perception is constant in both cases.⁷

¹ Descartes, Rene, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, Trans. by Donald A. Cross, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1998.

² Ibid., Meditation Two, Section 30, p. 67.

³ Ibid., Meditation Three, Section 39, p. 73.

⁴ Ibid., Meditation Two, Section 32, p. 68.

⁵ Ibid., Meditation Two, Section 34, p. 69.

⁶ Ibid., Meditation Two, Section 27, p. 65.

⁷ Ibid., Meditation One, Section 20, p. 61.

This analysis leads him to ponder over his mental perceptions. He concludes that the fact that he is conscious of this mental perception (which he calls thinking) proves that he exists. He states: “I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is simply to think, and which, in order to exist, has no need of any place nor depends on any material thing. Thus, this ‘I’, that is to say, the soul through which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body ... it would not cease to be all that it is.”⁸

He thus goes on to make his famous declaration: *cogito ergo sum* which is normally translated as ‘I think therefore I am’. It is a constant perception which one would like to term Awareness or Consciousness. The appropriate translation would perhaps be ‘I am aware, therefore, I exist’.

The third important conclusion that Descartes arrives at is that he is deeply aware of his own imperfections and errors in thinking and understanding. However, this leads him to realize that it is only because of that sense of ‘perfection’ which is within him that he is able to realize ‘imperfections’. He states that this ‘perfection’ is God and thus proves the existence of God. He states, “Indeed I have no choice but to conclude that the mere fact of my existing and of there being in me an idea of a most perfect being, that is, God, demonstrates most evidently that God too exists.”⁹ It is called the the Ontological Argument, proving the existence of God within man.

Descartes makes a moving analysis to prove the concept of God in relation to himself. He questions how he received this idea of God. “For I did not draw it from the senses, it never came upon me unexpectedly... (n)or was it made by me, for I plainly neither subtract anything from it nor add anything to it. Thus the only option remaining is that this idea is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me.”¹⁰

⁸ *Discourse on Method*, op.cit., Part Four, Section 33, page 19.

⁹ *Meditations on First Philosophy*, op.cit., Meditation Three, Section 51, Page 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The fourth important point made by Descartes is a categorical statement of an experience of God. Descartes describes this experience as follows:

“... at this point I want to spend some time contemplating this God,...to gaze upon, to admire and to adore the beauty of this immense light ...we now experience that from the same contemplation ... the greatest pleasure of which we are capable in this life can be perceived.”¹¹

The philosophical thinking of Descartes thus establishes conclusively that the ‘Existence’ of God and of himself is proved by ‘Consciousness’ which transcends the states of dreaming and wakefulness and also the various changes that appear to take place in both these states. That realization is filled with the ‘greatest pleasure’ or as Indian thought would describe it *Ananda*.

Descartes may well have been describing *Sat Chit Ananda*.

The Guidance of Bhagavan Sri Ramana

In one of his very first articulations during the time that he was living in the Virupaksha Cave, nearly a century ago, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharishi elucidated a simple methodology for attaining knowledge of the Self or *Atma* (or *Anma* in Tamil). This revelation was made as answers to questions posed by Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai, who later published them as a booklet, *Who Am I?*

The methodology contained in this little booklet came to be recognized as the method of *Atma Vichara* or ‘Enquiry about the Self’ or simply ‘Self-enquiry’.

When the question ‘Who Am I?’ is posed, the first obvious and natural answer is to state the name, the form, the parentage, the tradition, the community, the educational qualifications, the profession, and the physical characteristics, that one has been endowed with.

However, some reflection on this answer reveals that, over time, many of these aspects have undergone change. In particular, the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Meditation Three, Section 52, Page 80.

physical body has changed considerably. Similarly, the geographical location of one's residence might have changed; one's parents may have passed on. It is clear that this description of oneself, based on the body and its associations, may not be the answer. The very fact that one is able to remember events in childhood, or feelings at various different times and circumstances, leads one to think that the correct answer may be 'My mind'.

A consideration of the mind as depicting one's identity will reveal that the mind itself seems highly changeable. It is subject to a variety of moods, feelings, attitudes, thoughts and seems to continuously change. Thus one can conclude that the mind cannot be the answer to the question 'Who Am I?'

The human mind is, by nature, extremely mobile. The activity of the mind needs to be calmed down and the thought process has to be focused and concentrated. Bhagavan indicates that because mind and breath are closely related, it is possible to calm and concentrate the mind through slowing down and control of the breath. In such a calm mind, if one poses the question 'Who Am I?' or 'Whose Mind is Now Still?' or 'To Whom is this Question Arising?', then there is a great possibility of an answer arising.

Bhagavan demonstrates this condition by the example of a piece of firewood, which is used to light a fire, and itself gets burned in the resultant conflagration. The fire represents the Atma or Self. When the Self is realized, or experienced, the mind vanishes. Bhagavan categorically states that the Self and mind are mutually exclusive and cannot exist simultaneously. To explain this, he gives the example of the rope and the snake.

The rope and snake never co-exist. The snake exists in one's state of ignorance, and the rope stands revealed in the light of knowledge and awareness of the truth. The rope is the truth; the snake is ignorance of the truth and the associated obsession with a mentally constructed false world.

The key to the destruction of the mind is Awareness. After withdrawing the mind from the outer world and from the body, after calming it and completely focusing it, if one can open the window

to Awareness, mind vanishes and one realizes that one's true identity is the Awareness itself.

The two examples given by Bhagavan are very relevant in defining the nature of Reality. When the firewood is consumed by the fire, only the fire remains. That means, when the mind is subsumed, the truth alone remains. The search for truth results in truth resplendent. Similarly, when the rope is recognized, one is filled with happiness or Bliss or *Ananda* and the fears of the snake are destroyed forever. Also, the Bliss arises from Awareness of the rope.

Thus Bhagavan demonstrates and states categorically that the nature of Awareness is *Sat Chit Ananda*.

The Essence of the Upanishad

It is this truth and the associated methodology for attaining it that is proclaimed by the *Aitreya Upanishad*. It derives its name from its author, Mahidasa Aitreya, the son of Itara. It forms part of the *Aitreya Aranyaka* and occurs in the *Rig Veda*.

It describes vividly the creation of the universe with particular reference to the human being as the pinnacle of creation. It contains the famous Mahavakya, *Prajnanam Brahma* which is called the *Lakshana Vakya* that describes the nature of *Brahman*.

Brahman first creates the cosmos from the building blocks of the five primal elements or *mahabhutas*. It then creates the whole world of living and non living beings culminating in the pinnacle of creation, the human being. *Brahman* is said to enter the human body through the skull. It rests in the three levels of the human being, that is, the body with its sense organs, the mind and in the heart or consciousness. Operating from these three locations, the human system continuously revolves through the three states of deep sleep (only consciousness), dreaming (only mind) and wakefulness (mind and body).

It is interesting to note that, in the human body, the *Atman* asks itself the question, 'Koham Iti?' or 'Who Am I?'¹² This represents the state of nescience or ignorance of its true nature as life progresses.

¹² *Aitreya Upanishad*, Section III, Sloka 11. Swami Sivananda, *The Principal Upanishads*, The Divine Life Society, 1998. p.386.

The Upanishad outlines the example of Vamadeva who exists even as a foetus in his mother's womb as a realized soul. This is because of the benefits accrued from several past births. In this perpetual process, the individual soul progresses in its own development until, like Vamadeva, it attains self-realization even before birth, or like Bhagavan Sri Ramana, very soon thereafter. The birth could take place anywhere on earth and in any tradition. But the progress towards self-awareness is inevitable, as indicated in the life of Descartes, for example.

When, in answer to its own question, 'Koham iti?' the *Atman* realizes its true identity, the entire universe of diverse and multiple creation stands revealed as verily *Brahman*.

It is in this context of the universality of *Brahman*, that the realization *Prajnanam Brahma* dawns. It is the Awareness Principle or Pure Consciousness, which forms the basis for all these, which stands as the everlasting, ever present Witness to everything that is the True Self. I am, thus, my Consciousness.

This is the universal truth which Descartes explored and what the Upanishad authoritatively expounds. What is unique about Bhagavan Sri Ramana is his constant abidance and total freedom from identification with the transient body and mind. ▲

Sri Ramana Jyothi

Sri Ramana Jyothi, published since 1981, a monthly journal of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad, is dedicated to Sri Ramana Maharshi. The first half of the journal is in Telugu and the other half, totally independent of the first half, is in English. The journal provides a digest of interesting and uplifting material relating to Bhagavan, and much other spiritually-elevating write-ups. Subscription rates: Annual – Rs. 40 (US \$ 10), Life (15 years) Rs. 400 (US \$ 125). Cheques payable at Hyderabad are to be sent to Sri Ramana Kendram, 2-2-1109/A, Batkammakunta, Hyderabad- 500 013. e-mail : narainprof@yahoo.com

Surrendering to Sri Ramana Maharshi

D. SAMARENDER REDDY

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), an American essayist, philosopher and poet, says in his essay *Self-Reliance* that “a man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages.” Emerson may have been a genius, but should he have met Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, he perhaps may have made an exception when it came to the Maharshi, the sage of Arunachala. It has been over sixty years since the *mahanirvana* of Bhagavan and for many of us who did not have the good fortune of meeting him, we are left with the short films, photos and books of reminiscences besides his teachings. I would like to think that these are adequate, though not ideal (ideal being the physical presence of the Maharshi), to set off on the journey of Self-Discovery.

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Sri Ramana Maharshi touched upon practically every aspect of spirituality with a clear exposition on any path that one may be inclined to follow, be it *karma*, *jnana*, *bhakti* or *raja yoga*. He explained, “All the yogas – *karma*, *jnana*, *bhakti* and *raja* – are just different paths to suit different natures with different modes of evolution and to get them out of the long cherished notion that they are different from the Self.”¹ Nevertheless, he maintained that “Really there are only two methods: enquiry and devotion. One leads to the other,”² implying thereby that the other methods are preparatory in role.

While Bhagavan hailed Self-enquiry (*jnana yoga*) as the sure, direct path, he would often say that the goal of Self-realization can also be reached through surrendering oneself to God: “*Jnana Marga* and *Bhakti Marga* (*prapatti*) are one and the same. Self-surrender leads to realization just as enquiry does”³; “What the *bhakta* calls surrender, the man who does *vichara* [enquiry] calls *jnana*. Both are trying to take the ego back to the source from which it sprang and make it merge there.”⁴ Lest we be lulled into thinking that surrender was the easier of the two, he asserted that, “A devotee concentrates on God; a seeker, follower of the *jnana-marga*, seeks the Self. The practice is equally difficult for both.”⁵ Why is that so? “Surrender appears easy because people imagine that, once they say with their lips ‘I surrender’ and put their burdens on their Lord, they can be free and do what they like. But the fact is that you can have no likes or dislikes after your surrender and that your will should become completely non-existent, the Lord’s will taking its place. Such death of the ego is nothing different from *jnana*.”⁶ But he held out hope by stating that “Complete surrender is impossible in the beginning. Partial surrender is certainly possible for all. In course of time that will lead to complete surrender.”⁷

¹ Mudaliar, D., (comp.), *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 2002. p.219, 5-5-46.

² Venkataramiah, M., *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 1996. p.161, § 196.

³ *Ibid.*, p.40, §31.

⁴ Mudaliar, op. cit., p.35. Morning 2-11-45.

⁵ Venkataramiah, op. cit., p.87, § 91.

⁶ Mudaliar, op. cit., p.85. Afternoon 2-1-46.

⁷ Venkataramiah, op. cit., p.195, § 244.

You may say that “All that is well and good, but how do I develop enough faith in God, who seems an impalpable presence, to be able to surrender so unconditionally?” Again, the Maharshi’s teaching offers the solution. On innumerable occasions he pointed out that “God, Guru and the Self are not different.”⁸ *Mundaka Upanishad* says the same thing: “Anyone who knows that supreme Brahman [Self] becomes Brahman indeed.”⁹ So, surrendering to the Guru is equivalent to surrendering to God or the Self. Why is surrendering to the Guru any easier? It is because the Maharshi lived in our times and we have a very vivid picture of his life and teachings, recorded so very wonderfully by his visitors, endearing him to us as an embodiment of Truth. To read those accounts is to fall in love with the Maharshi, whether we are concerned with Self-Realisation or not, and after all as he said, “True surrender is love of God for the sake of love and nothing else, not even for the sake of salvation.”¹⁰

I read Bhagavan’s biography some 25 years ago. What astonished me then and continues to astonish me today is that Bhagavan took just thirty minutes, or, as he remarked “there was no time in it,” without the aid of any reading of the scriptures or apparently the grace of a guru to solve the riddle of life and death. I have been used to reading about the lives and teachings of various sages and saints of India who are reputed for their wisdom and superpowers. Nowhere do I find such an instance. As a matter of fact they struggled hard — often for decades — faced trials, temptations and tribulations while labouring their way to enlightenment. It was enough to discourage an ordinary mortal like me that enlightenment was only for the die-hards who could sacrifice everything. It seemed like I had to go to the Himalayas in search of a master, face up to the mortifications of flesh and take my chances with the discovery of truth, for one could not be sure if one was going to find the perfect master who could be

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.441, §440.

⁹ Gambhirananda, Swami, (trans), 2006, *Mundaka Upanishad*, canto II, verse 9, In: *Eight Upanishads* (with commentary of Sankaracharya), volume two, Uttaranchal: Advaita Ashrama, p.163.

¹⁰ Mudaliar, op. cit., p.266. 28-6-46.

trusted to know the truth and nothing but the truth. The difficulty was that it seemed like one could not know in advance if somebody knew the truth before entrusting oneself to his tutelage. Even if it was possible to know who knew the truth, no one seemed to have told clearly what the test would be to ascertain the genuineness of such a one. Bhagavan put an end to all these dilemmas.

Bhagavan makes everything crystal clear and easy or at least makes it look easy, which serves to bolster one's morale. There is none of the system building or dogmatizing that one finds in most of the other enlightened men. There is something zen-like about Bhagavan's life and teachings but mercifully without the annoying *koans* (the paradoxical anecdotes or riddles used in Zen-Buddhism whose meaning is not accessible to rational thought, and which bestow enlightenment through one's flash of intuition into their meaning). All this while remaining absolutely human, in fact more humane than most enlightened men; totally accessible and more loving than the man most in love. He met the most representative sample of humanity and made them all feel welcome and at home in his presence. All this is possible only for the Lord and Bhagavan was the Lord. And yet he was a man, or to be more accurate, he exemplified what a man should be to be worthy of the tag. One never tires of reading either about Bhagavan's life or his teachings. They seem to retain a freshness and are newly revelatory every time one reads them. So, let us call to mind the adorable memories of Bhagavan.

Swami Siddheswarananda, erstwhile head of the Ramakrishna Mission, Paris, wrote that "he [the Maharshi] is neither an 'extrovert' nor an 'introvert'. He is the most normal human that one can ever find. He is in effect a *sthitaprajna* [answering to Krishna's description of one in the *Gita*], the man whose intelligence is solidly founded. . . When I saw him I found in him the perfect example of the description which Sri Sankaracharya gives in his *Vivekachudamani*, when he explains what characterizes a *jivanmukta* [one who is liberated while alive]."¹¹

¹¹ Narain, Prof. Laxmi, (Compiler & Editor), 2009, *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 2nd ed., Hyderabad: Sri Ramana Kendram, p.41, No. 16.

So, we are apt to wonder like Arjuna does in the *Gita*, "What . . . is the description of one of steady knowledge [*sthitaprajna*], who is constant in contemplation? How does one of steady knowledge speak, how [does he] sit, how [does he] move?"¹² Let us piece together the appearance, personality and influence of Ramana Maharshi from the accounts left by his devotees.

He may not have been in his exterior distinguished but he was "compelling and disarming . . . [with an] austere yet kind face."¹³ Alan Chadwick O.B.E observed that "Bhagavan was a very beautiful person; he shone with a visible light or aura. He had the most delicate hands . . . with which alone he could express himself, one might almost say talk. His features were regular and the wonder of his eyes was famous. His forehead was high and the dome of his head [was very high]. His body was well-formed and of only medium height. . . . He was always scrupulously clean and his body gave off a faint perfume, though he never used any scented soap."¹⁴ His entry often made "no great impression; certainly far less than his photographs made. Just a white-haired, very gracious man, walking a little stiffly with rheumatism with a slight stoop."¹⁵ Paul Brunton, a British Journalist who introduced the Maharshi to the West through his book *A Search in Secret India*, found that the Maharshi's eyes shone with an astonishing brilliance.¹⁶ Eleanor Noye of California felt that when he smiled "it was as though the gates of Heaven were thrown open."¹⁷

B Sanjiva Rao of Indian Educational Service wrote, "He [the Maharshi] speaks little and only when he finds it necessary to do so. Silence is to him the most powerful expression of Being, which speech only hinders. He uses the power of this Silence in a most effective fashion. When any visitor presents him with a problem for solution,

¹² Sastry, Alladi Mahadeva (trans), *The Bhagavad Gita* (with the commentary of Sri Sankaracharya), Chennai: Samata Books, 1995. p.68, Second Discourse, verse 54.

¹³ Narain, op. cit., p.32, No.8.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.111, No.42.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.96, No.40.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.15, No.1.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.35, No.11.

he vouchsafes no answer but retires in the depths of his own being. He becomes the embodiment of the very essence of Silence, and in that tranquil quietness, the visitor finds his mind becoming still under an overpowering radiation from the sage. In that stillness, the problem dissolves and the visitor leaves the august presence marvelling what mysterious power has come to his aid.”¹⁸ Of course, he also gave guidance with choicest few words of instruction when necessary, which touched the heart and mind alike. Bhagavan “always radiated tremendous peace”¹⁹ that “passeth all comprehension”²⁰ and of the “kind never experienced before.”²¹

“Bhagavan had a great sense of humour, and when talking, a smile was never far from his face. He had many jokes in his repertoire and was a magnificent actor; he would always dramatize the protagonist of any story he related. When the recital was very pathetic he would be filled with emotion and could not proceed.”²² He always saw only the positive aspect in people, like for instance, when the discussion was centred on a man with criminal reputation, the only remark that came out from his lips was, “Yes, but he kept himself very clean, for he bathed two or three times a day.”²³ Of course, that did not mean that he did not show his displeasure or anger when the occasion demanded. Such occasions were usually when he was shown preference over others: “If it is a rule for her, it is a rule for all. I too should not stretch out my legs,” said the Maharshi when a visiting European lady was not allowed to stretch out her legs in front.²⁴

The Maharshi was very loving and considerate to all those who came in contact with him. Prof. Syed Hafiz records, “While I was lying ill with high fever the Maharshi was considerate enough to visit me three times and prepare *upma* for me with his own hands. . . . His

¹⁸ Ibid., p.34, No.9.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.111, No.42.

²⁰ Ibid., p.37, No.12.

²¹ Ibid., p.151, No.52.

²² Ibid., p.111, No.42.

²³ Ibid., p.20–21, No.1.

²⁴ Ibid., p.74, No.35.

sense of humanity was as great as his sense of spirituality. The mere sight or tale of human suffering touched his heart.”²⁵

While there are innumerable instances of miracles, dreams, visions connected with the Maharshi, about the only time he gave direct evidence of his being superhuman is captured in this passage from the comprehensive and delightful collection of reminiscences, *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*:

One evening when they [a couple from Peru] sat before Bhagavan [the Maharshi], the talk turned to Peru. The couple was describing the seacoast and beach of their town. Just then Bhagavan remarked, “Is not the beach paved with marble slabs, with coconut palms planted in between? Are there not marble benches in rows facing the sea, and did you not often sit on the fifth of those with your wife?” This remark came as a great astonishment to the couple and as they were wondering and were at a loss to understand as to how the Maharshi could know such minute details, Bhagavan smiled and remarked, “It does not matter how I can tell. Enough if you know that the Self is not limited by space and time.”²⁶

Though Bhagavan is now not in his physical form, we have the teachings, biographies, and reminiscences of Bhagavan which we can read and get the benefit of *satsang* with him, for he has assured us that “mental contact is the best Guru is not the physical form. So the contact will remain even after the physical form of the Guru vanishes.”²⁷ “*Sat sang*,” Bhagavan clarified, “means association with *sat* or Reality. One who knows or has realized *sat* is also regarded as *sat*. Such association with *sat* or with one who knows *sat* is absolutely necessary for all. Sankara has said that in all the three worlds there is no boat like *sat sang* to carry one safely across the ocean of births and deaths.”²⁸ ▲

²⁵ Ibid., p.48, No.23.

²⁶ Ibid., p.288, No.115.

²⁷ Mudaliar, op. cit., p.168–169. Morning 9-3-46.

²⁸ Ibid., p.273–274. 16-7-46.



Bedwyr and Feather

Harriet Worthington

At One With The Beauty of Nature

HARRIET WORTHINGTON

The deeper we look into life the more it unfolds itself, allowing us to see more keenly. Life is revealing. It is not only human beings who speak; if only the ears can hear, even plants and trees and all nature speak, in the sense that nature reveals itself, reveals its secret. In this way we communicate with the whole of life. Then we are never alone, then life becomes worth living.... one will realize that all life comes from one source which is the very life of all things, and not only life but intelligence also; this is what religion calls God. Whatever we call it, it is the same. The difference is only in name.

— Hazrat Inayat Khan

Picture a horse in your mind. Pause for a moment. What do you see? Nobility, beauty, strength, power, grace, courage, freedom or spirit? A beast of burden, mute, shackled and exploited? Ancient tribal cultures, fierce, proud and ready to do battle? The glamour of the racehorse, smelling of wealth and prestige, a creature on which to seat an ego, impatient to win, to be lauded? All are reflections

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of ourselves. Horses have carried humanity's development through the ages, our evolution powered by equines whether for war, trade, pleasure, prestige or agriculture. But as the horse's traditional role is increasingly overtaken by machines, the horse is once again inspiring our development — this time as healers, teachers, even gurus.

When I first trained as a horse-whisperer in my mid-20s, I wanted to be a fine horsewoman, capable of rehabilitating horses who had been damaged by the ignorance and arrogance of other trainers and owners. Instead of 'breaking' horses, I wanted to start their training under saddle with gentleness and compassion but I was still very much goal-focused: I wanted to be able to make the horse want to do what I wanted him to do. And I wanted others to recognize my skill in doing so, perhaps inspiring them to use the natural instincts and behaviour to train horses, as I did, rather than using brute force. My ego was still very much in charge.

It has taken me 15 years to realize that I was missing the point, and perhaps I am only now just beginning to understand. It is the horses who are our guides and healers, just as much or more than we are theirs. When I approach a horse in a spirit of humility and genuine appreciation of his soulful nature, a whole new perception of the world unfolds.

Martin Buber wrote about the idea of the 'I-Thou' relationship, which he used to describe the unity of Being and inter-subjectivity between individuals. They relate as subject-to-subject, rather than subject-to-object ('I-It'). There is nothing above and beyond the pure inter-relating between each other — no goal, no agenda. There is recognition of and respect for the inherent sacred nature of each other. This notion can be startling to many of us even when restricted to human-to-human relationships; it can switch on the light-bulb that allows us to honour both the divinity and the humanity of our species. It opens our hearts. It enables connection rather than separation. There exists "a network of phenomena that are fundamentally inter-connected and interdependent. . . Being connected with all of nature, of belonging to the universe is the very essence of spirituality."¹ Being in the Old

¹ Capra, Fritjof, *The Tao of Physics*, 1999, 25th Anniversary edition, p.7.

Hall at the ashram this January turned these from intellectual ideas into a beautiful healing experience as I sensed Bhagavan's presence — limitless compassion, yet a call also to take responsibility and serve a divine purpose within the limits of my small part of humanity.

Imagine the implications of extending this concept of I-Thou and inter-connection beyond the narrow limits of the human world to influence the way that we relate to our fellow creatures, to nature, to the planet. "The soul of every creature is derived from the one Soul. God, therefore, is not simply in every creature but is the essence of every creature. At heart, creation — including our creatureliness — is a showing forth of the mystery of God."² This is what horses are so clearly mirror to us if we take the time and stretch beyond our mindsets to recognize that all is Life, all is the creative, unified energy and that all of creation is God being reflected back to God in full glory.

Almost by accident, my vocation as a horsewhisperer took a different turn in 2004 when I was invited to bring horses to work with executives from a well-known company to influence their professional development. I demonstrated how one could train a horse to overcome fear, poor motivation, lack of engagement and boredom by working with his instincts and needs. The clients were able to handle the horses and in so doing received insights about themselves and each other. That first piece of work was fairly basic stuff but the impact on the executives was remarkable; they were genuinely moved and took away with them many ideas on how they might be better leaders and more effective at their job.

Over the years I have, with others, developed this work to become an incredible tool for leadership development and any other aspect of inter-relating. I work with teams of executives from global corporations and also therapeutically with individual clients, using horses as the medium for learning and development and psychological and emotional healing. This is not my achievement; it is the simple wisdom of horses applied in a different context. Horses place relationship as being of primary importance. As herd animals they are at risk from

² Newell, J.Philip, *The Book of Creation*, 2003.

predators and there is safety in numbers. They move as one; they have a flexible hierarchy in which ego plays no part; they respond to consistency, clarity and confidence; they form deep, lifetime bonds. The herd as a metaphor for an organization has many positive aspects: flexibility, responsiveness, being fit and alert to ward off competition, exploration and curiosity, resourcefulness and unity in adversity.

More than this, horses are mirrors to our selves. Time and again they see through false bravado to the trembling, uncertain heart; they recognize and resist our attempts to manipulate, and insist that we become authentic before they will co-operate. They close down when a person is disassociating from their real feelings but the moment we become fully in relation with ourselves and each other they become willing and responsive.

Some scientists refer to the activity of mirror neurons to explain such behaviours. This is where the neurons of one person or animal are fired when the neurons of another person or animal are triggered by an activity — it is as though the brain activity of both individuals is similar whether performing an endeavour or just observing it. The process of ‘limbic’ or ‘empathic resonance’ can also be used to describe the neurological process that takes place at a deep, experiential level. A ground-breaking book, *A General Theory of Love* has described it as “... a symphony of mutual exchange and internal adaptation whereby two mammals become attuned to each other’s inner states.”³

Yet there are aspects of this work that at present are beyond scientific explanation. Ramana Maharshi knew this through his own relationship with animals, as the following story (one of many) about his special cow, Lakshmi, demonstrates:

“Once Lakshmi came into the hall. She was pregnant at that time. It was after lunch time when Bhagavan was reading the newspapers. Lakshmi came near and started licking the papers. Bhagavan looked up and said: ‘Wait a little, Lakshmi.’ But Lakshmi went on licking. Bhagavan laid his paper aside, put his hands behind Lakshmi’s horns and his head against hers. Like this they stayed for quite a long time. I

³*The General Theory of Love*, Vintage Books 2000, p.63.

stood nearby looking at the wonderful scene. After some ten minutes or so, Bhagavan turned to me and said: ‘Do you know what Lakshmi is doing? She is in Samadhi.’ I looked at her and tears were flowing in streams down her broad cheeks. Her breathing had stopped and her eyes were fixed on Bhagavan. After some time Bhagavan changed his position and asked: ‘Lakshmi, how do you feel now?’ Lakshmi moved backward, as if reluctant to turn her tail towards Bhagavan, walked round the Hall and went out.”⁴

I have been honoured to witness some truly remarkable encounters between my horses and individuals who have come to me for psychotherapeutic interventions. One of my horses, Bedwyr, has an extraordinary ability to lead a person into a very deep, meditative, healing experience. The client and I go into the field (both a literal English pasture and a quantum field) perhaps with just the simple intention of ‘meeting’ the horses. I can see Bedwyr entering a trance-like state. His four hooves seem rooted into the ground, his breathing deepens and lengthens, his eyes half-close and appear to be softly focused a few feet ahead of him. Bedwyr has told me all I need to know about the client for this session — that he or she is in need of a deep, non-verbal healing. I suggest to the client, that if they feel safe, they stand a foot or two in front of Bedwyr, and mimic his body language. Having guided them a little to feel safe and to experience that their body is truly grounded, I then withdraw to a discrete distance to allow the connection between horse and client to deepen. At first the client may seem a little restless, but this usually subsides as they begin to trust the horse to guide their being into a stiller, quieter place. They might stand like this for an age, surrounded by nature, the sounds of birds, the breeze brushing their skin, the ground supporting them and the sky inviting them upwards. It is an unspeakable stillness. My only role is to have an empathic awareness of what is happening for the client and to ensure their physical safety when the horse is ‘doing’ or being the rest. At last Bedwyr will stretch out his neck, often touching the client on the heart or the head with his soft, velvety nose

⁴*Ramana Smrti*, Part Two. ‘Eternal Bhagavan’ by Shantamma, 1980.

MOUNTAIN PATH

and gently blow his sweet breath. If the client is weeping, he will lick their tears away. He may yawn to signal a deep energetic release. The trance lifts and all of us return to a more regular state of consciousness. If the client then wants to talk, we talk. Or they may want to paint or draw or write about their process. They feel truly met, truly seen by this great-hearted creature, who both inspires transcendence and keeps our feet on the ground, in the mud. It is the greatest privilege to witness such occurrences.

Another horse, black, beautiful Feather, huge and monolithic, stands behind a client as she discloses childhood abuse and violence. The woman is reliving her young, vulnerable, terrifying powerlessness. Feather seems to extend invisible wings around her, creating softness, security and deep understanding. The client emerges lighter, joyful, wrapping her arms around the horse's soft, warm neck.

In summer I often enjoy my morning meditation outside. One day I began to practise while standing with the horses. Imagine my astonishment when, day after day, as my meditation unfolded the herd of horses would spontaneously lie down on the ground around me. They would honour me by allowing me to continue my practice sitting in half-lotus in their midst. Now that is a truly blissful experience of one-ness, the distinction between human predator and equine prey animal lost in a state of no-mind. Somehow their presence seems to hold me and I can let go. Is this *satsang* — holy company — I wonder?

There have been other experiences: a visiting Indonesian *shaman* dancing with the horses and his movement seemed to embody the essence of horse. They responded with joyful exuberance. Or when galloping bareback, feeling the wind, the power, the experience feels like a transcending my own body through unity with the horse, and there is nothing beyond the Now existing.

Something seems to move through these horses that is more than we can conceive. There is a spirit of service, of deep compassion, of being held in love. The stiller and quieter and more humble we are, the more they show us the way back home. It isn't a matter even of horse-whispering; it's learning truly how to listen, with all of our senses, all of our being. ▲

POEM

Divine Lady Mauna

(A free rendering of verses 43-54 from Muruganar's *Padamalai*.)

Alan Jacobs

The loving lustrous smile of Divine Lady Mauna,
That most lovely lady of liberation,
Dispels the darkness that obscures Realisation.
Whatever labours fate forces you to complete,
Cherish as pure gold, the worship of her lotus feet.
Through her grace bestowing glance, so auspicious,
The delusions of wealth and family, however propitious,
Like smoke from the chimney, will soon cease to be,
So praise that maiden with the strong wish to be free.
That's the most fitting of all righteous dharmas,
The very best of all desirable karmas.
So cherish as the most lofty brahmacharya,
To live in union with our dear Lady Mauna.
In her presence, don't raise your head as 'I',
Or a glimpse of her face, she'll surely belie.
If you remain subject to her domination
She will reunite you with Self Realisation,
Harmoniously and with blissful delight,
Embrace her at heart with all your might.
Let your life in a state of Oneness and bliss,
Be a model for others they won't want to miss.
So merge with Lady Mouna deep in the heart,
The best householder's dharma, till death do us part.



Sri T.P. Kalyanarama Sastri with tambura player

Harikatha and Sri Ramana

MEERA GRIMES

In India, philosophy, religion, social disciplines, and the fine arts are not separate entities, but all interrelated. All activities, sacred or secular, spiritual or mundane, artistic or ritualistic are interwoven. They all point directly or indirectly towards the ultimate goal of human life, which is *atma jnana* or Self-realization. The Indian society itself is based upon the principles of a religious tradition. The two great treasures of India: the *Vedas* and the teachings of its mahatmas and saints, are the sources for all Indian art and science. The fine arts: music, dance, drama, poetry and painting, in India sprang out of this spiritual foundation. Originally they were meant for the worship of God. Indian tradition is built upon this close connection between the *nivrtti* and *pravrtti* or religious life and mundane life.

Meera Grimes has been performing *Hari Kathas* from the age of ten. Her *katha* gurus include: Thuraiyur Sri Rajagopala Sharma, Embar Vijayaraghavachariyar and Swami Vaidyanathan. Her *katha* repertoire covers over forty Hindu saints as well as stories from devotional literature. She was awarded the prestigious title *Kalaimamani* in 1982.

Harikatha is one of the fine arts of India that contains narration, poetry, and different varieties of music, rhythm, drama, dance, humour, philosophy, advices, side stories and more. It is spiritual in nature and is performed by a single artist with the help of accompaniments. It is a unique art of South India and takes a special place in the human life because its aim is to spread *dharma* and *bhakti* and also enlighten people about both the *nirguna* and *saguna Brahman*, and remind them about the highest good of human life or *paramapurushartha* which is *atmajnanam*. It preaches of *sanatana dharma*, using *purana* stories embellishing the narration with music, narration, drama, and *abhinaya* (expression of sentiment).

The root of *Harikatha Kalaksepa* as it is performed today in South India is found in the work, *Dasabodha*, of Saint Samartha Ramdas of Maharashtra who lived in the seventeenth century. He was the guru of the Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji and a contemporary of Saint Tukaram. He has explained the theory of *Harikatha*, in his *Dasabodha*. Like the great Vidyanaya (Fourteenth Century), Samartha Ramdas had so many facets to his personality — political capacity, religious fervour and deep understanding of the basic values of existence, not to speak of his missionary zeal and saintliness. Samartha's breadth of vision can be seen in his conviction that knowledge and devotion are both compatible and complimentary. He placed great faith in the *Puranas* in the foundational scriptures: the *Upanisads* and *Bhagavad Gita*, in the *Avatars* and temple worship. All these were integral aspects of his religious disposition. However, it was *Harikatha* which was unique to Samartha because he chose the art as a vehicle to save Hindu *dharma* and culture. He thought that one of the best methods to inculcate *dharma* in people is through *Harikatha* because it could teach them *dharma* in a sweet and enjoyable way with all the fine arts combined with it. *Bhakti*, *jnana*, and *dharma* will lead one to realize the supreme goal of human life.

The logic of this choice is, as I have learnt from my spiritual guru Swami Remaji, as follows: The goal of human life is *atma jnana* or the attainment of the non-dual At-one-ment with God. To attain that one must follow the spiritual *dharma*. Love of God will make it

easy to follow *dharma* but love of God is generally connected with the *saguna* rather than with the ultimate *nirguna* (formless). However love of God and listening to the greatness of *saguna Brahman*, will make one understand and cherish the closeness of God to one self. So, listening to the stories and glories of God will make one's mind get attached to God and that attachment will induce one to follow *dharma* and that will purify one's *chitta* or mind. When *chitta suddhi* (mental purity) is attained by following the *dharma*, it will lead one to *atma jnana*. Such a life will be a blessing for world welfare.

Harikatha in Tamil Nadu was established during the reign of Ekoji who was the first King of Maharashtra Dynasty of Tanjavur (1676-1683). He was the step brother of Chhatrapati Shivaji. At the request of king Ekoji, Samartha Ramdas sent a few of his best disciples to Tanjavur. Among them Sri Bhimaraj Goswami, Sri Ananta Muni Swami and Raghava Swami were prominent. Bhimaraj Goswami established a *matha* at the South of *Samandan Kulam*. He lived for 99 years. Anantha Muni established a *matha* at Mannargudi and Raghava Swami at Kovur Mariamman Kovil. They all conducted their respective *mathas* according to the instructions of Ramdas. One of the main activities of the *matha* was the periodical performance of *Harikatha*, and thus the art of *Harikatha* was introduced to the people of Tanjavur, Tamil Nadu. Samartha established 71 *mathas* all over India during his period and the number of *mathas* increased up to 1100 but started diminishing during the British regime in India. Through this one can understand how the art of *Harikatha* spread to other States of India. Retaining the framework of Samartha, the art of *Harikatha* grew along with local traditions and the creative talents of the local artists in each State.

The first local musician of Tanjavur who took *Harikatha* as his profession was Tanjavur Krishna Bhagavata (1851-1903). When he was a teenager he played violin for *Morkar* or *Morgaum Ramachandra Bhuva* on several occasions. Krishna Bhagavata took the basic structure of the *Harikatha* tradition of Maharashtra, added his own ideas, and gave a new and distinctive form to *Harikatha* and called it *Harikatha Kalaksepa*. He performed the *Harikatha* in Tamil language,

and introduced and popularised compositions like *saki*, *dindi* etc. singing them in original Hindustani tunes. He also introduced dance (*natyam*) and *abhinaya* in *Harikatha Kalaksepa*, of which he is known as the father in Tamil Nadu.

Many musicians of Tamil Nadu were fascinated by this art form of *Harikatha* and shifted their profession from music to *Harikatha*. Thus *Harikatha* spread all over Tamil Nadu and also to other parts of South India. Later a great musician named Ramaswami Sivan of the mid-nineteenth century started doing *Siva Kathas* on *Periapuranam*. From the early nineteenth to the later twentieth century it was the glorious period for *Harikatha Kalaksepa* in South India, especially in Tamil Nadu.

Once someone placed the *Periapuranam* in Tamil prose in Bhagavan's hands, and he began reading out of it. Bhagavan was a master in story-telling, and he used to tell lots of stories. His solo-acting was ever the delight of his devotees; his modulation of voice, for different characters, changing gestures and postures with each incident, was wonderfully effective. His devotees who thronged in the hall enjoyed such occasions and benefit by the recitals.

Samartha says, a *Harikatha* performance should be filled with *bhakti bhava* or devotional experience of God. Every moment of the *katha* should be only on or around God. While describing God, if the performer could soak in the divine mood and visualize God even for a moment it, the *katha* would electrify the audience.

Bhagavan Ramana, a *Brahma Jnani*, and a great devotee of Lord Siva, brings right before our vision what Samartha said about a *katha*. Once Bhagavan read out the life of Kannappar, the great hunter-devotee. He went on reading incidents in his early life: how Kannappar went to the forest and found Kudumi Devar, the Sivalinga, his Lord, up the Kalahasti Hill in the Chitoor district of Andhra Pradesh; how he worshipped the *sivalinga* with water carried in his own mouth and flowers taken from his own hair; and how he offered the Lord his own meal, well-cooked beef already tasted by him — knowing no better and having no better to offer his beloved Lord. The way in which the ordained priest, Siva Gochariar, resented

the intruding defiler of the sacred Sivalinga was so characteristically brought out by Bhagavan, with his own explanations of the rites and the meanings of the *mantras* used in the worship, that it enriched the recital greatly, to the benefit and admiration of the devotees. He enacted the way Kannappar worshipped Lord Siva. He described how innocent and pure in devotion was the heart of Kannappar. "When Bhagavan came to the story of how Kannappar was plucking out his second eye to heal the second of the Lord, and of how the Sivalinga extended a hand to stop him, saying, 'Stop, Kannappar!' Bhagavan's voice choked, His body perspired profusely, His hair stood on end, tears gushed from His eyes; He could hardly utter a word, and there was silence, pin-drop silence in the hall. All were dumbfounded that this great *Jnani* could be so overpowered by emotion and ecstasy at the great hunter-saint's devotion. After a while, Sri Bhagavan quietly closed the book, dried the tears in His eyes with the ends of His towel, and laid aside the book, saying, 'No, I can't go on any further.'¹ On another occasion Sri Ramana said, "I do not know how those people who perform *Kalakshepam* and explain such passages to audiences manage to do it without breaking down. I suppose they must first make their hearts hard like stone before starting their work."²

Samartha said that *Harikatha* can even take one to the realization of God. This reminds us of the words in *Aksharamanamalai*: "Having become silent, if one remains like a stone, can that be called real silence?"³

Bhagavan's blossomed Heart had in it the perfect warmth of devotion, no less than the supreme light of Knowledge. ▲

¹ Iyer, T.K. Sundaresa, *At the Feet of Bhagavan*, 1996. p.29.

² Mudaliar D., *Day by Day*, 2002. 12.12.1945 Afternoon. p.70.

³ Verse 87.



Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Shrine

Consciousness

As Revealed in the *Mandukya Upanishad*

DENNIS WAITE

The following is an extract from the second edition of *The Book of One* by Dennis Waite, O-Books, April 2010. ISBN 978-1-84694-347-8. This will be available soon in an Indian publication. This excerpt may also be found on the internet Journal of advaita.org.uk - no. 05 - April 2010.

What do we actually mean by the word 'conscious'? It derives from the Latin '*con scire*' meaning 'to know with' and it originally referred to the insights that were shared with other people, i.e. knowledge in the sense of truths, not information. Later, it came to be used when talking about knowledge that was, to some degree, secret, shared only amongst a few. Even by the first century AD it was being used for private knowledge, known only to the individual. When the Latin was absorbed into the English

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language, it was used to create two words.¹ ‘Conscious’ was used to refer to private thoughts and emotions, which no one else could share directly and ‘conscience’ was used for private knowledge deliberately withheld from others and therefore likely to make one feel guilty. Here again then, we have an example of a word whose current usage is now the opposite of its original meaning. Instead of sharing with others, we are keeping it to ourselves. Nevertheless, we think we know what consciousness is. We are fully conscious when we are awake. We become unconscious if we are knocked out or given a general anesthetic and when we are in a deep sleep. And dreaming is somewhere in between, isn’t it? We might suggest that there are some other states, such as hypnosis, meditative trance or drug-induced hallucination and we would almost certainly claim that consciousness ceases altogether when we die. If pressed, we might argue that it is something that has evolved in step with increasing complexity of the brain; that it is something that plants do not have, animals have a little and us a lot. When it comes to the crunch, we would probably concede that we really do not have any solid ideas about what it actually is, though we would be in no doubt at all that we have it.

On the face of it, you will be reassured that Advaita agrees with our experiential observation that we are usually aware of three basic states viz. waking, dreaming and deep sleep. As you will also have expected by now, however, the philosophical description of these states is not quite how we might have described them. The *Upanishad* that deals in the greatest depth with the subject is the *Mandukya*, with its *kArikA* by Gaudapada. We know now, or to be strictly honest with ourselves, we know that this philosophy says that there is only One Self, *Atman* or *brahman*. Nevertheless, this appears to manifest in various ways and the sages and scriptures have to work backwards, through negation and inference in order to ‘explain’ or enable us to

¹ ‘Consciousness’, with a capital ‘C’ is differentiated from ‘consciousness’; and ‘Self’, with a capital ‘S’, from ‘self’. The words with capital letters refer to *brahman/Atman* and with lower case to the individual person. Humans exhibit consciousness only by virtue of Consciousness.

intuit the nature of reality. This *Upanishad* demonstrates how it is the same Consciousness that functions throughout and ‘witnesses’ all three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. It uses the states of consciousness in order to ‘talk about’ reality and begins by saying that the manifestation has four facets or aspects. (In fact the *Upanishad* itself, as distinguished from the commentary, is very short and uses the mantra ‘OM’ as a very powerful metaphor to explain all of this. However, since it would necessitate a substantial diversion into Sanskrit to benefit from this, I will ignore it here.)

The first of these states is called *jAgrat*. This is the waking state and the waker-ego, called *vishva*, is conscious of the gross, physical, external world of sense objects. In the waking state, the ‘individual’ is complete (*vishva* = whole) with all its faculties of senses and mind.

The second state is called *svapna*, meaning ‘sleep’, but only for the body — the mind remains active. This is the dreaming state and the dreamer is called *taijasa*. In this, the dreamer is conscious of the subtle or internal world of objects, i.e. thoughts, feelings, etc., but is unaware of the external world. In the dreaming state, Consciousness effectively projects the world of the dream from its own ‘light’ and the dream ‘consists’ of this ‘light’ of the mind (*taijasa* = ‘originating from or consisting of light’).

The third aspect is *suShupti*, meaning ‘excellent rest’ since both body and mind are now resting in the deep-sleep state. The sleeper-ego is called *prAj-na*, literally meaning ‘intelligent’, ‘wise’ or ‘intelligence’. In the deep-sleep state, the sleeper sees neither the external nor internal worlds of objects. The senses and mind are inactive and nothing is experienced, i.e. there is no perception or conception. The state is governed by ignorance (*avidyA*) but there must be some vestige of awareness since, for example, if someone calls our name, we will probably wake up. During this state there is no ‘knowing’ of anything nor appearances of any kind. *prAj-na* can also be translated as ‘the one who is nearly ignorant’. Because Consciousness is still present, the self is not totally ignorant, but nearly ignorant. It is said to be a state of pure consciousness and bliss, precisely because there is no mental

agitation but, since there is no knowledge, we are not directly aware of this. It is said that here the Self is identified with *avidyA*.

The fourth aspect is not actually a 'state' at all — it is called *turIya* — and it is characterized by neither ignorance nor error. But I will not say anything more about this for the moment; it is not something with which most of us are familiar. The pure consciousness of deep sleep can be considered to emerge, either to illuminate the subtle world of thoughts and emotions, as we become the dreamer, or to illuminate the external world, as we become the waker. In deep sleep, there is only ignorance — we do not also misperceive the world, mistaking a rope for a snake for example, because there is no perception at all. There is thus ignorance but no error or misperception. This non-apprehension is the same as the 'veiling power' of *mAyA* — *AvaraNa*.

In dreaming and waking, the ignorance is still there but, with the mind and senses now active, we additionally fall into error — we misapprehend reality. This misapprehension 'effect' follows from the ignorance 'cause' of non-apprehension. Misapprehension is *vikShepa*, described earlier as the projecting power of *mAyA*. If we could see the rope, we would not mistake it for a snake. The misapprehension occurs under the conditions in which there is partial ignorance — we can see that there is *something* there but not sufficiently clearly to make out that it is a rope. Thus, the (partial) ignorance is the effective *cause* for the error. (Note that, if there is total ignorance — i.e. we cannot see anything at all — there is no error either. If we do not see the rope in the first place, there is no way or scope to mistake it for a snake. Hence the expression 'ignorance is bliss'!) This explains why the deep-sleep state is known as the 'causal' state. In that ignorance is the potentiality for all manifestation in the dream and waking states.

Consciousness is that in which all else appears. It is there when there appears to be nothing. It can be thought of as the silence between thoughts or as the screen, upon which the movie of life is projected, unaffected by all, yet without which there would be nothing. Sri Poonja asked what we would see if he put up a blackboard the size of the wall and marked a small white spot in the middle of it. Ninety nine percent of people, he said, would say that they saw a white

spot. Almost invisible, this is what draws our attention such that we do not even see the big blackboard. It is in our nature to look for objects against the background and ignore the background itself. In just the same way, we see a cloud in the sky and miss the sky. And we see the thought arising in Consciousness and know nothing about Consciousness itself.

It is inevitable that our minds will search for an understanding of what Consciousness is, as though it were an object that we could observe, rather than that which enables observation to occur in the first place. All theories that we may come up with are going to fail and, worse, may delude us into thinking that we know something when we do not.

Ultimately, the scriptures summarize the matter very simply in one of the four great sayings or *mahAvAkya*-s from the *Upanishads*: *praj-nAnam brahma* — Consciousness is brahman. Consciousness equates to brahman, which is the one reality, all that there is. (The four 'great sayings' from the Vedas are: 'Consciousness is brahman' from the *Aitareya Upanishad*, 'That thou art' from the *Chandogya Upanishad*, 'This Self is brahman' from the *Mandukya Upanishad* and 'I am brahman' from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.)

Before looking in more detail at the three states of consciousness, it is important to note that all of these explanations are made from the vantage point of the waking mind. Strictly speaking, it can only speak from experience about the waking state, since it is, by definition, not present in the other states. The true situation is summed up in the *Katha Upanishad* (IV.4): 'Having realized that it is the great, all-pervading Atman that sees the objects in the dream and the waking state, the wise man does not grieve.' ▲



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Quest

Chapter Four

LUCIA OSBORNE

OM

A part from meditation I was using incantations, mostly silently, seldom aloud. The mind needs some diversion even in sadhana. While in the hill station one evening I felt very strongly the urge to switch over to the incantation of OM but I hesitated, not having received such initiation. I knew by then that one should be properly initiated into a mantra by someone authorised to do so who has the power to transform the recipient. A mantra is a revelation from the depth of eternal silence. Reality turned towards manifestation reveals itself as *shabda*, a vibration of primordial sound, which translates itself into various forms on various levels. A mantra becomes truly potent when the physical sound does not deviate from the vibrations of the sound-origin as revealed to rishis who transmit them to recipients only when they are ready. If a mantra is concocted to be used as a convenient

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means for concentration and imparted by people who are ill-equipped to do so, it can do great harm and lead astray into confusion. Sound-vibrations are known to have shattered glass. This applies also to people.

Pythagoras explains that all beings and things produce sounds according to their nature, aggregates of dancing sound-producing atoms whose perpetual song creates dense or subtle forms.

The urge to switch over to OM from another incantation into which I had been initiated by a Western guru became stronger. I sat musing. All was quiet, the children having gone to sleep. Suddenly I heard it, OM...OM...OM...a low reverberating sound like the humming of a bee going on and on; OM...OM...OM... I listened spellbound, how long I could not say. Then to my great surprise I realised that the sound came from myself, deep down from my own heart. This must be initiation, I thought, and from then on I used this incantation without compunction. Actually OM can be used as an incantation by anyone without initiation; far safer than to be initiated into it by self-styled teachers not authorised to do so. Om is the substratum of all sound. It is pronounced at the beginning of every rite, prayer or undertaking.

Sitting on a rock on the plateau at Kodaikanal facing Perumal hill one day, everything joined in this incantation like a low steady vibration at the heart of the cosmos. It went on and on, a low humming sound on which the whole of creation seemed to be strung.

According to Gaudapada OM is to be known as the Lord present in the heart of all. He defines it as the *Pranava*, as the immutable; the beginning, middle and end of all and the best and most efficacious of all mantras. It may reveal itself to a devotee in a paean, an Alleluiah of praise and thanksgiving at the throne of God, the sky rent asunder with the glory of it. Wagner might have been inspired by such an experience, as in some of his compositions, there seems to be an echo. In Mozart's *The Magic Flute* the lovely quiet voice of the flute comes through calling...calling throughout the din of the world (*samsara*) which again and again drowns it; but the voice will not be stilled; Krishna's flute, a reminder from the inner witness in the heart watching what we think or do.

“The best is repetition with the mind,” Sri Bhagavan reminds us. “The point is to keep out all other thoughts except the one thought of OM...Then by conscious effort or invocation or meditation we prevent our minds from thinking of other things, then what remains is our real nature which is OM...”

In Virupaksha cave where Bhagavan spent a number of years sometimes the sound of OM becomes audible, always like the humming of a bee.

The enlightened Virupaksha lived and is buried there. In the inner shrine a lingam was erected over his *samadhi* (tomb). The cave is said to be in the shape of OM.

Once on Sivaratri (the night of Siva) a group of us went round the Hill (*pradakshina*). On the way back we stopped at Virupaksha cave. The swami who lived there had just finished a fast of one week and a number of people came to see him and bring food to break his fast. There was quite a hubbub. I was sitting in meditation in the inner shrine when suddenly I heard the sound of OM, a low humming sound quite unaffected by the considerable noise. A devotee asked Bhagavan about hearing this sound in the cave and Bhagavan told him to go and find out. It does not always reveal itself.

When the spark in the ashes of the heart bursts into flame, fanned by the invocation in a breathless moment, one may swallow the whole universe — mountains, rivers, seas, whales elongating themselves to enter more easily into one point in the heart. It all starts from there, a projection. Such is the reality of this world. Sayings of sages from diverse sources confirm it: “The vast orb of heaven with its myriads of outgoings and incomings was concealed in a single point.” (Rumi). For the Chinese Zen master Huang Po, a grain of dust is identical with all the vast world systems: “All the phenomena are intrinsically void and yet this mind with which they are identical is no mere nothingness. It does exist but in a way too marvelous for us to comprehend. It is an existence which is no existence, a non-existence which is nevertheless existence. So this true void does in some marvelous way exist.”





James Clark

Advaita and Planetary Government

ALASDAIR BLACK

If there are any higher civilizations in the universe, a visitor from one of them might be astonished that that we on this Earth are at such an infantile stage of development: “The human inhabitants of this planet have very little Self-knowledge. Look at the way they treat each other, as well as their animals and plants, let alone the Earth itself. Very few of them are aware that all life is interrelated and interdependent, fewer still that everything is actually One. Although there is some awareness that they are in imminent danger of destroying themselves, they do not seem to care. What can we do to help them?”

Well, as Advaitins, we might answer that the best help we could have would be in the form of a swift transformation in our consciousness, a general realisation that everything *is* part of everything else and that everything actually *is* One. We are well aware that the real problem is inside ourselves, in our limited consciousness, and that the only

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real solution lies in the transformation of that consciousness. Or we might decide that we should not seek any kind of intervention since this would amount to an interference in God's business?

One of the many things that such a visitor might be amazed at is that we do not even have a single Planetary Government. We *do* have the nucleus of such a Government, but what a woefully inadequate instrument the United Nations has proved to be in so many situations following the Second World War. Which is not to minimise the achievements of that great organisation. It took the First World War to bring about the League of Nations and the Second World War to create the UN. *But the UN was invented by the victors of the Second World War, to reflect their vision.*

Is it not time for the United Nations to be replaced by what is needed *now* — a World Government with a Supreme Court and an International Peacekeeping Force? I put this as a question rather than an exhortation, since I am not at all sure that in our present state of consciousness a World Government *would* be a good thing. Any institution, no matter how lofty its aspirations, is only as good as those who administer it. And no matter how many safeguards there were, such a Government could still be open to abuse, with potentially catastrophic results. Nevertheless, it is probably true that nothing short of a Worldwide Government has any hope of dealing with such matters as our endless wars, over-population, poverty, the growing problem of refugees ... not to mention our treatment of other forms of life and all the other ecological problems we face.

Take the recent situation in Iraq, a situation which directly or indirectly affected everyone on this planet. Most of the world was aware of the problem of Saddam Hussein by 2003, but most of us did not feel that an invasion of Iraq was either necessary or desirable. Many voices warned that an invasion would further destabilise the Middle East and inflame the problem of fundamentalism. But this did not stop a minority of nations taking matters into their own hands. Following 9/11, Saddam, with his alleged weapons of mass destruction and having flouted so many UN resolutions, had, according to the US and the UK, become a threat to the whole world. It was argued

by those two nations that the UN would never do anything and that *someone* had to take action. But the threat turned out to have been misconceived, many people have lost their lives and fundamentalism has indeed been inflamed. The world is not a safer place and international tension has increased, quite apart from all the damage, including the ecological damage which is always a by-product of war.

If such action had been necessary — and it might have been — it should have been taken by and with the consent of a majority of nations through the UN. Not by a small minority. The USA and its allies did as they pleased and their action was declared by the Head of the UN to have been illegal. What is needed is a supra-national organisation with sufficient power of its own to ensure that nothing like this can ever happen again as well as to bring about an appropriate solution.

In the ecological sphere, moreover, the problems of global-warming, pollution, over-fishing — the list is endless — are not helped by the inability or unwillingness of national governments to deal with them. We cannot, for example, allow the destruction of the rain forests on which we all depend to continue unchecked. Or for our oceans to go on being over-fished. So many similar problems could be remedied by concerted international action.

It is, above all, unbelievably foolish to go on wasting money and resources on the arms industry in a world of diminishing resources. Colossal sums are spent on arms while thousands of people are dying of hunger and disease every day. An International Peacekeeping Force would be infinitely cheaper to fund than the present insanity, including the ultimate insanity of nuclear weapons.

Many of us feel that World Government is a good idea, but that it is impossible to achieve. 'Pie in the sky'. Much more realistic for matters to go on being dealt with by our existing nation states, particularly by our own, than by an unwieldy, elephantine Super-State which would involve yet another layer of Government. There is, above all, the unwillingness to give up *national sovereignty*. Yet the different states of North America managed to become the United States not so long ago and Europe is now in the process of becoming something similar, although many of us in Europe are not happy with this, not least because the energy we are

putting into the creation of a European Super-State could be far better spent in the creation of a single Universal State, which would result in the acquisition by us all of our *true sovereignty*.

The creation of a World Government, however, is a proposition of an altogether different magnitude. How do we get nations such as the USA, Russia, China, India, the UK and France to even contemplate the prospect of such an undertaking? It has been difficult enough to get the world's nations to sign up to the International Criminal Court. The creation of a Planetary Government is a gigantic challenge involving a host of problems. None of which, however, are incapable of solution. It is *not* beyond us and we already have a foundation with the UN in its present form.

But how do we set up this Government and what form would it take? It is a matter of re-inventing the UN. A new constitution would be needed to incorporate, inter alia, various safeguards against the abuse of power, with a mechanism to allow immediate action to be taken in emergencies without breaching such safeguards. Supreme Courts, civil and criminal, with a unified system of international law, would need to be put in place. National armies would be disbanded in favour of an International Peacekeeping Force and all nuclear weapons surrendered. Indeed, the surrender and destruction of nuclear weapons in this way is probably the *only* realistic way for us ever to be rid of them.

As Advaitins, we may agree that there is no substitute for individual realisation. But can we not also agree that a system of Universal Government might be worth attempting? It may in any case come about when the necessity for it is sufficiently borne in upon us. Or it could evolve as the outcome of a gradual transformation in our consciousness. We can only hope that it will not come about as a result of some new catastrophe, since it is unlikely that our consciousness will change sufficiently in the foreseeable future while the predicament we are now in is rather dangerous. We are told that we have already passed the ecological 'tipping point' or that it is not far off. A Planetary Government, whose concern would be for the *whole* Earth and *all* its inhabitants, could be the one thing to offer some hope of saving us from ourselves, of checking our headlong rush towards self-destruction.

Can we not at least concede that a World Government would be a step in the right direction, an outer expression of that inner unity which is always present? The question is more than academic for each one of us. Should we, each one of us working in our own corner of the universal canvas, no matter how tiny that corner may be, do what we can to facilitate or encourage the creation of a Planetary Government? Or even accept that it is an objective worth striving for? ▲

Rama In Hollywood

Ana Callan

Ramanatha Reddy with his cine camera
took 100 feet of film of his beloved Rama
and laid them out
on a white sheet
for all to view
but our dearest Rama,
70 years old then,
could not see
the images of his holy body
petting children,
his withered frame
shambling up the hill
and so they placed the sheet
against the window
by his sofa
and still he could not see
that mirage of form
moving round the ashram
pursued by a dozen devotees.
But did he care,
this beam of godlight,
when his heart all the while
gazed direct into infinity?



BOOK EXCERPT

Etty Hillesum

A Life Transformed

PATRICK WOODHOUSE

Etty Hillesum's short inspiring life and tragic demise during the Nazi persecution of the Jews of Europe was made known to a number of devotees living in or near the Ashram through an early, poorly-edited translation of her diaries maintained by the Ashram library. Devotees have compared Etty's uncompromising courage with that of the great saints and found her witness an inspiration for the spiritual search. The excerpts that follow are taken from the introduction of this very recent, more comprehensive edition and are interspersed with quotations that appear in the main body of the text.

Introduction

On 9th March 1941, a 27-year-old Dutch Jew named Etty Hillesum — living in enemy-occupied Amsterdam — made her first entry in a diary, which, together with the letters she later wrote from a transit camp, became one of the most remarkable set of documents to emerge from the Nazi Holocaust. They tell the story of a life which, in just two and a half years, was entirely transformed.

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The dark and ever-threatening background to the diary are the terrible events of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, which at that time was sweeping across Europe. In July 1942 this persecution was to take this young woman into Westerbork, the transit camp for Dutch Jews on their way to the east; and eventually in September 1943 to Auschwitz, where she soon died.

Under the pressure of these appalling events and through a relationship with an unusual Jungian therapist who had a huge influence upon her, Etty was to emerge as an inspirational figure: inspirational for those who knew her at the time and with whom she shared the suffering of the transit camp, and inspirational for all whose lives, through her diary and letters, she has touched since. Through her vivid writing we meet a young woman who shaped and lived a spirituality of hope in the darkest period of the twentieth century.

Following the narrative of her life, we explore the process of personal change that occurred in her as she emerged from an insecure and chaotic past. As her confidence grew and she discovered a more integrated self, she began to talk about a sense of 'God' and to pray. In her diaries, she describes herself as 'the girl who could not kneel' and yet 'who learned to pray'. It was, at first, hesitant and faltering, and she was embarrassed by it, but slowly her growing inner life to which she constantly returned became all important to her, sustaining her more and more as the persecution intensified and the world around her darkened:

In the past, I, too, used to be one of those who occasionally exclaimed, 'I really am religious, you know!' Or something like that. But now I sometimes actually drop to my knees beside my bed, even on a cold winter night. And I listen in to myself, allow myself to be led, not by anything on the outside, but by what wells up from deep within. It's still no more than a beginning, I know. But it is no longer a shaky beginning, it has already taken root. (p. 43)

As the noose tightened, and the realization grew in her that her people were helpless and faced an inevitable destruction, a new and intimate understanding of God was born in her heart. It was her rich

spiritual imagination and the sense of inner depth which colours all her writing, which enabled her, amidst the evil and suffering that she describes so graphically, to see the world differently:

This afternoon during the Beethoven, I suddenly had to bow my head and pray for all who are lingering in freezing concentration camps, prayed to God to give them strength to remember the good moments of their lives, just as in hard times I shall remember this day and many days during the last year, and draw what strength I need from them lest I become embittered with life. We must see to it that we daily grow in strength to bear the times that will come. (p. 72)

In the hellish conditions of the camp she continued to insist, extraordinarily, that life is meaningful and good. How could this be? She was not mad. Under the pressure of the suffering she did not become detached from reality — for she describes everything around her so vividly: the overcrowding, the mud, the cruelty, the traumatized broken people, the weekly cattle-truck train taking its pitiful load of exhausted humanity away to 'the east', from where they were never to be heard from again — she is the chronicler of it all. But despite everything, she continued to have a deep sense of the goodness and beauty of life.

Above all else that was remarkable about her, Etty Hillesum refused to hate. While others around her dealt with their fear and reinforced their resistance by hatred of the German occupiers, Etty refused to hate, and she held to this conviction to the end:

... You must be able to bear your sorrow; even if it seems to crush you, you will be able to stand up again, for human beings are so strong, and your sorrow must become an integral part of yourself... you mustn't run away from it, but bear it like an adult. Do not relieve your feelings through hatred, do not seek to be avenged on all German mothers, for they too, sorrow for their slain and murdered sons. Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that is its due, for if everyone bears his grief honestly and courageously, the sorrow that now fills the world will abate. But if you do not clear a decent shelter for your sorrow, and

instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge — from which new sorrows will be born for others — then sorrow will never cease in this world and will multiply. (p. 73)

Her courageous story leads into profound understandings about the nature of God and how suffering and sorrow can be redemptive, not destructive. These emerged out of the struggles of her inner life and the insights she arrived at were not easily gained:

... If we abandon the hard facts that we are forced to face, if we give them no shelter in our heads and hearts, do not allow them to settle and change into impulses through which we can grow and from which we can draw meaning — then we are not a viable generation. It is not easy — and no doubt less easy for us Jews than for anyone else — yet if we have nothing to offer a desolate post-war world but bodies saved at any cost, if we fail to draw new meaning from the deep wells of our distress and despair, then it will not be enough. (p. 74)

What we witness in the diary, and through her letters to her friends, is a battle to go on living with hope and integrity even as the world around her collapses:

Now I can bear a little more than I was able to bear yesterday... even the moments of deepest sadness and black despair finally make me stronger. (p. 83)

One moment it is Hitler, the next it is Ivan the Terrible; one moment it is Inquisition and the next war, pestilence, earthquake, or famine. Ultimately what matters most is to bear the pain, to cope with it, and to keep a small corner of one's soul unsullied, come what may. (p. 86)

Her greatest weapons in this are her love of people, her deep sense of God within, and her passion for truth.

My life has, so to speak, been extended by death, by my looking death in the eye and accepting it, by accepting destruction as part of life and no longer wasting my energies on fear of death or the refusal to acknowledge its inevitability. (p. 82)

Leaving for the Transit Camp

The misery here is really indescribable. People live in those big barracks like so many rats in a sewer ... One night last week a transport of prisoners passed through here. Thin, waxen faces. I have never seen such fatigue as I did that night ... Early in the morning they were crammed into empty freight cars. Then another long wait while the train was boarded up. And then three days travel eastwards. Paper 'mattresses' on the floor for the sick. For the rest, bare boards with a bucket in the middle and roughly seventy to a sealed car... How many I wondered would reach their destination alive? And my parents are preparing themselves for just such a journey. (p. 127)

Life in the Camp

A woman of eighty-seven clung to my hand with so much strength that I thought she would never let go ... And the bowed little gentleman of seventy-nine: he had been married for more than fifty years, he told me; his wife was in the hospital in Utrecht, and he was about to be taken out of Holland the next day ... Even if I went on for pages, I still couldn't convey any idea of the shuffling and the stumbling and the falling down, the need for help along with the childish questions. You can't do much with words. A helping hand on the shoulder is sometimes too heavy.

Of all the shortages in Westerbork concentration camp, the shortage of space is surely the worst. [It] is really dear in the colossal, hastily built barracks, those jam-packed hangars of drafty slats where, under a lowering sky made up of hundreds of people's drying laundry, the iron bunks are stacked in triple decks. ... On these iron beds people live and die, eat, fall ill, or lie awake through the night, because so many children cry, or because they cannot help wondering why so little news comes from the thousands who have already set out from this place. (p. 112)

Conclusion

As death approached, the faith that [Etty] held to so courageously became everything to her. But, perhaps surprisingly, Etty was not a 'religious' person — at least not in the institutional sense of that word. She belonged to neither synagogue nor church and showed no interest whatever in institutional religion. Her route to God was

initially through psychotherapy and an exhaustive, relentless and disciplined grappling with the self, which led to the discovery of the hidden inner depths of the human soul.

This makes her a woman for our time, when institutional religion is in decline and yet the hunger for authentic spirituality is more keenly felt than ever. Etty speaks across the boundaries of religions, pointing to a way of being human that transcends such divisions and overcomes the evils of violence and hatred. It was a way that was tested to the uttermost and shone through under the most terrible circumstances imaginable. Her story rekindles confidence that the way of faith is not, as so many sceptical voices in today's world suggest, an absurd and misguided delusion.

Finally, her story reflects on the meaning and significance of her life and spirituality for us now, in our very different time. It is an extraordinary story of an extraordinary human being whose life, in so short a time, was transformed; and who, although she did not survive the evil of the Holocaust, triumphed over it.

Before the train left the Netherlands, Etty wrote a card to Christine van Nooten which she threw out through a crack in the boarded-up train. It was picked up and sent on by farmers. It read:

Christine, opening the Bible at random, I find this: 'The Lord is my high tower.' I am sitting on my rucksack in the middle of a full freight car. Father, Mother, and Mischa are a few cars away. In the end, the departure came without warning. On sudden special orders from the Hague. We left the camp singing, Father and Mother firmly and calmly, Mischa too. We shall be travelling for three days. Thank you for all your kindness and care. Friends left behind will still be writing to Amsterdam; perhaps you will hear something from them. Or from my last long letter from camp.

Good-bye for now from the four of us. Etty. (p. 131)

They arrived in Auschwitz on 10th September. She died there on 30th November. ▲

Maha Bhakta Vijayam

Initiation of Vithoba into the Path of Jnana

NABAJI SIDDHA

Undaunted by Sripada Swami's rejection and silence, Vithoba followed him like a shadow. One day, in a fit of anger, he addressed the saint, "O master, I will not turn to anybody else; a chaste woman will not choose even trinity of gods over her husband, similarly I will not seek refuge in anyone else. Even if the husband is a rogue, will she go in search of a respectable man? Despite his ill-repute, won't she worship him alone as her lord. What kind of fate will greet a disciple who deserts his guru, finding faults with him? Such a disciple taking on the quality of a prostitute will deserve only hell in the end. Are we not aware of the fate of Trishanku who became an outcaste suspended in mid air upside down for deserting his guru Vasishtha, resorting to favours from Viswamitra? I have cast my lot with you, I will not retrace my steps or turn in any other direction. Why do you put me through these tests? Please be kind enough to destroy my ego, cut asunder the knot of ignorance, impart the knowledge of the Self and bestow on me eternal bliss."

With a loving look, Sripada Swami held Vithoba in his embrace and said, “O noble soul, I am awaiting some one like you who has firm determination. Are you a householder or a bachelor without the experience of sense-pleasure? Are your parents alive?”

Thinking to himself, “My married state may pose an obstacle to my being accepted by him; however, I am *brahmachari* for all practical purpose,” he replied that he was a *brahmachari*, innocent of sensual enjoyment and his parents were not alive.

The guru was pleased with his answer.

“O beloved child, now listen with all your attention. I will impart to you that rare *Mahavakya* which is superior to all *mantras*, which bestows easily all *siddhis*, is suitable for meditation on the formless, the supreme *Advaita* principle, the last word on the *Vedas*, which sets fire to all bodily afflictions, ends all miseries of the mind, which is the cause of the four *Vedas*, reveals all mysteries, bestows the bliss of knowledge of *Brahman*, which is contemplated by all *yogis*, fulfils all yearnings, destroys the ego, defies all description, puts an end to all dualities and differences of religions and sects, and confers the self-effacing union with the Absolute and a life of boundless transcendental bliss.”

Falling at his lotus-feet, Vithoba pleaded, “Please explain the import of the exalted *Mahavakya*.”

Exultant on finding a suitable receptacle, Sripada Swami said, “O my beloved disciple, you are fortunate to receive this. This is revealed to a disciple after testing him for a period of twelve years. If a teaching is given to an unripe soul, it is like throwing a seed on the rock. It becomes futile bringing doom on both the teacher and the disciple.

Now listen with attention, retain it in memory and contemplate on it. Even the ancient sages could not adequately elucidate the meaning of the holy dictum. When Brihaspati attempted, language failed him and he fell silent, how can I do it justice? May my guru bestow his grace on me and enable me to enlighten you on this subject.

Self-knowledge pertains to *atma*, *Brahman* pertains to *Paramatma*; the nature or *swarupa* of *Brahman* is *jnana*. *Jnana* is that All-knowing witness or the ultimate Revealer of all that is revealed i.e. It knows not only the sense-objects, but also the senses that recognize the sense-

objects, the inner instruments that activate the senses, the egocentric ‘I’ that sustains the inner instruments and also that ignorance in which all these are contained. *Brahman* is the In-dweller in all and the All-knowing witness in all.

It is known by various names, namely, Consciousness, Truth, Bliss, Eternal, Mysterious Dweller, Pure, Immaculate, Attributeless, Perfection, Effulgence, Blemishless, Supersoul, Source, Beginningless, Transcendent, Motionless, All-pervading, great Cause.”

Vithoba asked, “O master! How can the Indweller within one person be the witness of all?”

The teacher explained, “Just as firebrand and a wick, lake and a pond, river and a stream, a group and an individual, grove and a tree differ only in name, but not in essence; similarly, the witness in one and all is the same in its fundamental nature. When it is indicated as the Indweller of all, All-knowing witness in all, it is called *Paramatma* and in an individual body as *jivatma* or *atma*. The name differs according to the embodiment. This truth is upheld by scriptures. Great sages through different *Puranas* and scriptures declare that he who sees difference, even unwittingly, between *atma* and *paramatma* lives in the realm of ignorance and will ultimately reach the plane of unawareness or hell.”

Vithoba asked, “If *atma* is the same as *Paramatma*, then who is in bondage and who is to be liberated, who liberates the bound one, why should one strive for the eternal state? Why should one seek to serve the saints or perform meritorious deeds? Then why indeed should one take to scriptural studies or devotion to God? My mind is assailed by all these doubts. Please enlighten me.”

Sripada Swami said, “O wise disciple, one may say that it is the *jiva* who is liberated. If you look deeply into the nature of *jiva*, you will find only the Supreme Void and nothing else. It is like boxing with one’s own shadow. It is like the play of the children in which they superimpose the role of a king or a minister on themselves and introduce certain rules for the game; likewise the non-existent *jivahood* has been superimposed on the *atma* by the false sense of ‘I’ through the contact with inner and outer equipments and the interplay of senses and mind. Thus, the individual

soul deluding itself, remains imprisoned in the transitory worldly life and goes through the endless revolution of birth and death. While the nature of the individual is *satchidananda*, forgetting it by the power of *maya*, he takes himself to be the adjuncts of body-mind, treating his wealth, wife, children and relatives as his prop and believes that this life alone gives him happiness. He takes whatever is experienced by his sense organs as real. If one causes his own downfall, what can be done? Cherishing the mortal body and its associates as oneself and everlasting, he is mesmerized by sense-enjoyments. Remaining unaware of one's true nature, and taking the non-self i.e. the body-mind-intellect complex as the self, one remains in bondage. Such a *jiva*, even after the end of the present world age, considers the afflicted body as his self.

Ignorance is the state of not enquiring into the true nature of the three states of waking, dream and sleep which are the gross, subtle and causative sheaths of the soul. The guru reveals to you clearly like a gooseberry seen on the palm, your real Self which observes as pure witness the separation of *jiva*, identifying itself with the body and claiming ownership as 'this is my body, my eyes, my ears, my nose, my mind, my life etc.', and living by sensory experiences in wakeful state, fantasy of the mind in dream state, total unawareness in sleep state. Such a *sadguru* is indeed the Lord of the universe. Realization of the Self in wakeful state is indeed true liberation from body-mind identification. Bondage is attachment to the perishable body, which immerses the *jiva* in sense enjoyments like the fly which is drawn to foul smelling things or like the pig which wallows in filth and is assailed by the notion of pain and pleasure. Just as Jaya and Vijaya were restored to their original status after their downfall, one should be relieved of the bondage on earth.

One should strive for dispassion, freeing oneself from the obsession of sense gratification and evil contact with sense-objects, and necessarily court the company of those who live by the eternal Truth and who impart perfection and contentment to others by their steadfast, blissful state.

Adopting a noble way of life like Karna who offered up all his merits in exchange for life Eternal and had the vision of the Lord in his last moment of earthly life and who was born as Siruthondan in his next life and who by the grace of Lord Karthikeya attained the immortal

state. O dear disciple, you should multiply meritorious deeds which will lead you to the noble path which is favoured by the great beings.

Don't become unsteady of mind, or abandon the practices which you are already observing, lured by unripe gurus who applaud an obscure path. Having adopted a particular course, stick to it with a steadfast mind, peace and contentment, probe into the mystery of the three states of existence, destroy the mind's initiative and intensify your efforts to investigate into the cause of bondage and play of *karma* to annihilate 'I' and 'mine'. Don't fritter away your life caught in the web of desires and *moha*, unable to discriminate between good and bad, revolving in the cycle of transmigration and living your life like dumb cattle driven by the whip of fate. Have firm faith in the guru who by setting aflame the cotton bundles of *sanchita karma*, the germ of birth and death, with the blaze of his eye of Knowledge eradicates ignorance and establishes you in the ever blissful state of Reality.

Have unswerving devotion to your *Ishta*. It is He who comes to the rescue when the devotee dies before erasing the treacherous mind and attaining perfection. The Lord uplifts him in his next birth, fulfils all his heart's desires and hastens to him at critical times just as He rushed to protect Prahalada. With total faith in your *Ishta*, carry on your practices."

Thus, quelling Vithoba's doubts, the great *acharya* said, "Now, fixing your mind in *yoga* and restraining all your senses, realize the eternal *paramatma* as your very *atma* and abide in bliss." With a ray of smile adorning his face, the noble teacher asked, "While your innate state, your *swarupa* is bliss, why do you search for it hither and thither?"

Vithoba asked in a puzzled voice, "If my very nature is *ananda*, then why do I experience unhappiness and grief?"

"Since you are ignorant and unaware of your real nature, you do not experience the bliss of the *atma*."

"Though I know that I am not the body, mind, senses and intellect and I am that unsullied *atma* which reveals everything including the primordial ignorance, why is the bliss still eluding me?"

"To attain bliss, you must abide in the Self. Just as you have learnt about the truth of your nature intellectually, similarly you must experience this truth within."

“How to abide in the Self?”

“With the firm conviction that you are not the body, and restraining the wayward mind from its modifications and distractions, becoming dead to sense cravings, and rising above honour and dishonour, without succumbing to the movement of thought, emerge as the master of your mind. Then fixing your mind on the *atma*, become absorbed in Silence. This will bestow on you the state of *nirvikalpa samadhi*.”

“Will internalizing the outgoing mind and holding it still enable one to reach the ever-blissful state?”

“Experiencing the tranquility of deep sleep during waking state is the bliss of the *Brahman*.”

Vithoba, in spite of emptying his mind, fixing his attention unwaveringly within and remaining like a motionless painting, did not feel the dawn of bliss.

Sripada Swami asked, “What do you feel in deep sleep when all senses and sense instruments fall silent?”

“It is a blissful state,” replied the disciple.

“What makes you blissful then?”

“There is no movement of thought or wave of worldliness disturbing me.”

“Joy and sorrow are the conditions of the mind. As the mind subsides in deep sleep and consequently sensory experiences of the world are absent, what is left is only a void. As *atma* alone remains in this state, free of all superimpositions, you feel the *ananda*. That *ananda* is your real nature.”

“O Master, how to experience this bliss in the wakeful state?”

“The inner and outer instruments are the source of misery, whereas *atma*'s nature is bliss. Ignorant of this fact, why do you superimpose the afflictions of the body-mind complex on the *atma*?”

“O bestower of grace! The sufferings of the body-mind-senses cloud the experience of bliss.”

“Listen, until the dissolution of the body, it is agitated by pain and pleasure, grief and joy. However, for one who has experienced the Self, these varying expressions appear like a dream. He looks upon these

conditions dispassionately without losing his state of equilibrium. Untouched by these externalities, he dwells in bliss.”

“Is such a person, who is ever-blissful under all conditions, alone truly liberated from all bondages? Is not liberation within the reach of others?”

“Though there are four types of exalted souls — *brahmavid*, *brahmavara*, *brahmavarya* and *brahmavarishtha*, it is the *brahmavarishtha*, not conscious of where he lives or the afflictions and ongoing functions of the body, who reigns supreme in the lofty heights of immortal bliss. He is indeed the sovereign among liberated souls! Immersed in torrents of bliss, he experiences the final beatitude even while in his body, as clearly as a fruit on the palm. May you also attain this rare state and revel in bliss!”

“O noble master! Can one attain this state of liberation, even while being alive in the body?”

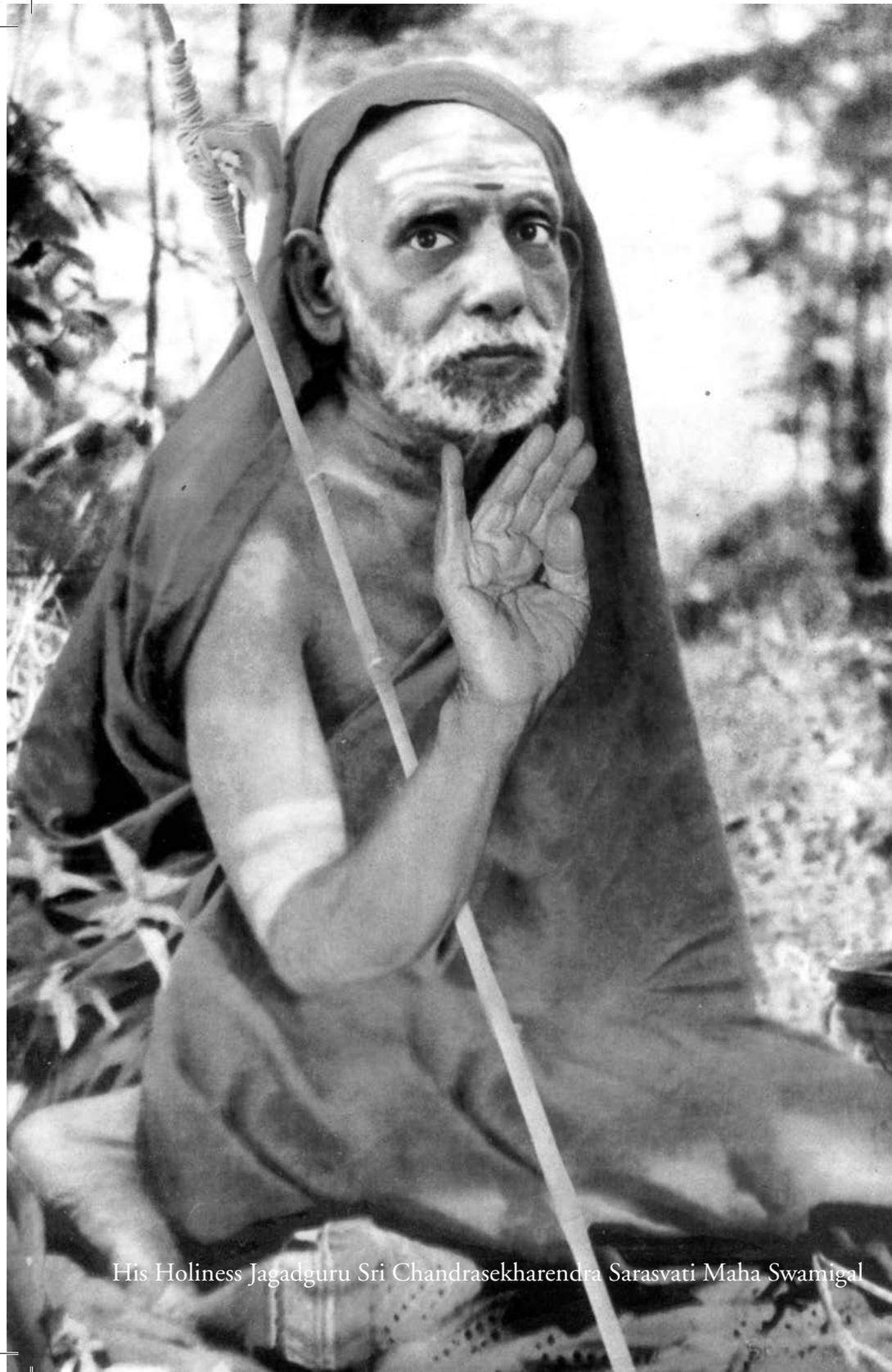
“Liberation is freedom from the bondage called attachment. Bondage is hell. While sorrow is bondage, bliss is liberation. Liberation is not attained in any other world. Freedom from bondage here is liberation. Therefore, get rid of worldly sorrows and abide in bliss.”

Awed by the prospect, the young *sannyasi* asked of his master, “How long will it take me to reach that exalted state of *jivan mukti*? When will you bestow your complete grace on me?”

“Incomparable child! Apple of my eyes! From this moment, give up your identity with the body, the *dehatma buddhi*. Uproot all desires from its stronghold. Be content with whatever you get to appease your hunger. Speak only of the eternal life with whoever associates with you. Destroy all the waves of the mind and transcend the pairs of opposites like honour and dishonour, good and evil. May you ever abide in your true Self and remain absorbed in the great silence!”

With this benediction, Sripada Swami bestowed the *sannyas* name of Chaitanya Swami on Vithoba and became absorbed in *samadhi*. The blessings of the venerable guru burnt all the mental inclinations and past impressions of Vithoba, enabling him to be fixed in the transcendental state. Nabhaji said, “O my beloved *siddhas*, are you listening to my story? In this state, Vithoba appearing radiant, wandered around the city of Varanasi, forgetful of his body and acting like a madman, sometimes like an innocent child.” ▲

(To be continued)



His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Maha Swamigal

VEDANTA TEXT TRANSLATION

MAHARAJA THURAVU

Glory of Sannyasa: The Life and
Teachings of the King-turned-Ascetic

SRI KUMARA DEVA SWAMIGAL

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI TANMAYANANDA SARASVATI

(Continued from previous issue....)

The king dissuaded his ministers from preventing his abdication of the throne in favour of seeking Self-Knowledge, by expounding spiritual truths. He then exhorted his grief-stricken citizens and dear relatives not to plunge into unnecessary despair but gracefully accept his renunciation of kingly duties and allow him to pursue his higher calling.

41. Listening to the king's firm words, all the close relatives gave up their hopes and returned home. Now the parents of the king, hearing the determined resolve of their son became distraught and hastened to stop him. They pleaded, "Our dear son, we have become old now; what arrangements have you made for our maintenance and to whom have you entrusted our care? Without attending to your duty of ensuring

Swami Tanmayananda Sarasvati has long been associated with Arunachala and lives at the base of the sacred hill. A regular contributor to the magazine, he is familiar to readers as Sadhu Tanmaya Chaitanya.

our safety, where have your thoughts gone? Dear child, please turn around and show your sweet face. Having begotten you, our bellies are burning, unable to bear the pangs of separation from you.”

42. The king replied, “If one looks at the Self which is pure consciousness, it is clear that there is no father or mother to that eternal Existence. On the other hand, if you look at this body of mine, both of you are not the primary cause for its seeming existence. It appears to exist like a dream object, coming out of the two-fold power of *Maya*, namely *aavarana* and *vikshepa* (the veiling and projection powers). If you investigate objectively, it will be clear to you that there is no one here who has *not* begotten me!* What I said is true and equally applicable for both of you. You lack perfect discrimination in the truth of these matters. Stop here and do not follow me anymore”. Saying thus, the king left his parents and moved on.*[The meaning is that he is a product of the whole cosmos and not just an isolated product of two individuals!]

43. Then his sweet wife who fulfilled the criteria for incomparable beauty outlined in the ancient texts [*chamudrika lakshanas*], realising the steely determination of her husband to live in the forest as a stern ascetic, followed him in great haste and confronted him with much love and a melting heart. She fell at his feet and with tears streaming from her eyes said, “I cannot live even for a moment in this world without your company and I shall die of unbearable grief, no sooner than you leave me”.

44. Hearing her words, the king then said, “Oh slim-waisted beloved, listen to me carefully! Within each one of us, the Great Lord who is God Himself, is shining as the innermost Self. He is the true consort to each one of us. He is within you as well and He is your true husband and protector. Without looking within and staying firmly holding onto His feet, why do you delude yourself into thinking that this perishable body of mine is your husband and Lord? The supreme God alone is the incomparable Lord to all of us. Seeking that Lord

only, I am going away leaving behind everything.” Hearing this, the queen objected, saying:

45. “It is alright for you to say that God alone is the Lord for all and accordingly you renounce all for His sake; however, the wisdom of the scriptures is common for all of us, including both men and women. So, all of us should accept their verdict in the matter. The sacred texts enjoin renunciation for a man only when his wife is an obstacle for his spiritual pursuit. Do those scriptures declare that I should renounce you, who are my dearest Lord? The *shastras* dealing with renunciation do not contain any such injunction that is applicable to me. For a wife, the husband alone is the Lord and refuge according to such texts. Following their injunction, knowing that there is no refuge to me other than you, being at your feet is my only solace.”

46. The king then addressed her with the words, “You have clearly and correctly stated what the scriptures enjoin. You are really blessed with ripe discrimination. However, I have arrived at a stage where I have no desire left to continue to live in this impermanent world nor have I any more interest in pampering the body with comforts and pleasure pursuits. You have been my beloved and sweet consort. You have been my chaste wife and therefore it is not righteous on your part to obstruct my words and disobey my wishes. Therefore, do return to the kingdom, leaving me free to pursue my calling.” Saying thus, the king finally renounced her too and left that place as if he were an indifferent stranger to her.

47. *Even though a woman can be very learned in all spiritual texts and can gain much wisdom thereby, it is extremely difficult for a very young wife to live in separation of her husband.* The grieving queen seeing her beloved husband leaving her behind like a stranger, could not bear the agony of her separation and wept bitterly cursing her own *prarabdha* karma which caused her sudden isolation. Utterly disconsolate, she reached a lonely spot where no one could see her, cried in great anguish and fell down in exhaustion and despair.

48. The noble queen lamented, “Oh beloved king! Even after being separated from you, has the great Lord ordained me to continue to live in this world? Has the former *prarabdha* karma that brought us together in felicitous house-hold life in this birth, finally exhausted itself this day? When will I ever see you again, my Lord, who lived with me happily for so long and is now going away from me forever?” Grief-stricken she slowly wended her way back to the city and reached the residence of her maternal uncle to live under his care.

49. The king Maharajan then renounced everybody and left that city as well as his country, repaired to a deep forest and sought the refuge of *jnanis* who were ever abiding in the repose of the Self; he then sought from them clarifications on the *mahavakya upadesa* imparted to him by his former *guru*, and dwelling constantly on their import, eventually gained the clarity of Vedantic knowledge and became capable of overcoming the delusion of *Maya*.

50. Whenever hungry, he went into the town and approached the houses of the residents and begged for food; whatever was offered to him, he cheerfully accepted in his hands serving as a vessel and ate with relish. Some worldly men jeered at him derisively as if he were a ghost-possessed being. Unmindful of such taunts and without feeling ashamed or embarrassed, he wandered all alone without any desires and cravings of this world or the hereafter.

51. This king of ascetics had decided that if he were to settle down in one place, attachments in the form of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ would encrust his soul in bondage and so he always moved about alone in unfettered freedom. He endeavoured to focus his attention on the Self wherever he happened to stay by never turning towards the worldly things. His mind was ever intent on Self-abidance (*atma-nishta*), though physically he was on the move, without remaining to any one place.

52. Ever facing the Self thus and ripening the mind in such *samadhi nishta*, the ascetic king enquired into the origin of this manifest world (*drsya jagat*) as to wherefrom it appears and ascertained

that it arises solely from thought*; he further pursued the enquiry as to wherefrom thought itself originated and saw that thought has the Self (*svarupa*) alone as its source. He therefore concluded that since the world cannot exist without thought and thought cannot appear independent of the Self, namely Consciousness, all things manifesting as name and form are thus reducible to the Self and hence to one’s own Consciousness, which pervaded the entire creation.

*This verse, along with the next verse, can be considered the heart of Maharaja Thuravu. It perfectly anticipates the core teachings of Bhagavan Ramana, confirming that the highest Truth is absolutely the same, as it transcends all limitations of space, time and climes that separate the phenomenal existence of mystics and seers through the *millennia*. The words in the Tamil verse have perfect alliteration and cadence and since it captures in a cryptic style the essence of Bhagavan’s teachings, it is appropriate to present the verse in English transliteration to enable the aficionados of Tamil literature to savour the richness of the original composition. This verse in its style and content is reminiscent of Bhagavan’s verses.

Thondridum ulagam engae thondridum enna nokki
Thondridum ninaivil endrae, thondriya ninaivu tha anum
Thondridum idatthaip paarthu, thondridum sorupatthu endrae
Thondridum porulgal ellam sorupame endru kannnaan!

53. Thus the king reasoned from his own experience that all manifest objects owe their existence (*asti*), effulgence (*bhati*) and lovability (*priyam*) only to the *Svarupa* when viewed bereft of their name and form (*nama-rupa rahitam*) and therefore they are essentially the Self alone which is shining as *sat-chit-ananda*. Thus he inferred that this entire creation appears upon the Self, like a snake superimposed on the rope and, devoid of an independent existence, it is ephemeral and unreal (*mithya*) whereas the Self is the changeless substratum which is his own Reality and thus attained, the stillness of unshakeable peace.

(Note: This verse reflects faithfully the teaching given in *Dakshinamurti Stotram*, verse 3, commencing with: *yasyaiva sphuranam sadatmakam asat kalparthakam bhasate!*)

54. Of all kings wearing crowns, this king [being the foremost by virtue of his unrivalled dispassion] wished to examine whether his vision was abiding in the Self under all circumstances and so went to many other cities and countries. He wandered all over the earth and affirmed to himself that the above-said vision of seeing only the immanent substratum of *siva svarupa* — in and through all manifest objects — remained unchanged; he became tranquil in mind, undisturbed by hunger and disease and attained the clarity that he is ever the undecaying Self. Seeing his own body and intellect as mere appearances upon the Self, he shone brilliantly as the embodiment of liberation, without the slightest taint or attachment to anything whatsoever.

55. Thus the king of all kings, who wore the crown of *moksha*, realised that he was of the nature of all-pervasive consciousness and therefore concluded that there was no other king in any direction who was superior to him; he identified the *jiva-bodha* (finite individuality) as merely an imagined superposition on his own *siva-svarupa atma* and purified it by *maha vakya vichara* through dissociation of all *upadhis* from the Self; thus he saw himself pervading all objects of the entire creation as pure *sat-chit-ananda* and abided as the self-effulgent form of Consciousness.

56. Then the king saw himself as the supreme Self which is different from the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal) and also as the witnessing consciousness for the three alternating states (waking, dream and deep sleep); he understood that nothing really appears which is apart from the Self and independent of the Self and therefore this world is comparable to a lightning bolt, being insubstantial and fleeting, a mere appearance imagined due to the power of Maya; just as no golden ornament exists truly without gold and in fact is nothing but gold, in the same way he ultimately discovered that nothing exists apart from himself and that he pervaded every object as its very existence (*satta*).

57. Thus the youthful king ascertained that bondage is nothing but seeing the world as different from oneself and *liberation results the moment one understands the world to be one's own infinite form (sarvatma bhava)*; all the objects that appear distinctly before one's eyes are mere appearances in mind and cease to exist in the absence of thoughts; all attachments to objects drop off when known to be mere thoughts, which are again not apart from the Self. Gaining this vision, he remained in the great stillness of peace without any sense of differentiation (*bheda drshiti*).

58. Then the king understood that by virtue of this supreme knowledge, the suzerainty of the entire earth and all the resultant wealth and pleasures appear as unworthy as a blade of straw [and is fit to be discarded without a second thought]; ruling over this world of *tattva jnana* by employing his subtle intellect to grasp the truth pointed out by the *upadesa* of his *sadguru*, the king attained the *moksha samrajya* and became a fulfilled soul (*krtakrtya*) who has accomplished all duties and has nothing more to achieve in this world or hereafter.

59. [To illustrate how he was deemed to have performed all his duties without a blemish] the king ascertained that in reality there is neither bondage nor liberation at any time* and that what exists eternally is only that supreme *vastu* which is *Brahman*; people smitten by evil *karma* alone without knowing this truth are deluded and imagine [by the power of their own *sankalpa*] notions of bondage and consequent liberation, and suffer as a result of their own imagined delusory concepts; further, he concluded that the supreme *Brahman* which is beginningless and endless, which is neither created nor ever destroyed, is nothing other than the *svarupa* of his own Self, and by ever fixing his gaze upon the Self [aided by *sruti*, *yukti* and *anubhava* that is, scriptural testimony, reasoning and experience respectively], the king verily became that *Brahman* himself. *[Compare Bhagavan Ramana's teaching in *Upadesa Undiyar* v.29 & *Ulladu Narpadu*, v.39.]

60. Thus the king, in the wake of his knowledge of the Self, recognised that he was the whole (*purnam*) without the slightest lack whatsoever, and became extremely cool in mind, and reposing ever in the Self, he became free from all misery and was filled with deep inner joy; he had no home anywhere and found his abode in his status as the all-pervasive *Brahman*.

61. The king now became the sovereign emperor of the all-pervasive kingdom of *Brahman* by virtue of gaining *Brahma-vidya* and recognised himself as existing everywhere and in every object; without any obstruction in such understanding, he became immaculate. When asafoetida is kept in a closed vessel for a long time, it retains that smell even after the spice is removed; in the same way, the mind soaked in the three *gunas* (*tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*) upon enlightenment retains the *sattva guna* characterised by tranquillity while completely getting rid of *tamas* and *rajas* characterised by delusion and restlessness respectively. The ignorant mind under the sway of all the three *gunas* is called the 'formful mind' while the enlightened mind resting only in *sattva guna* is called the 'formless mind'. In this way, the king held on to the formless mind by recognising his real *svarupa* and became blissful in nature and remained consolidated in his ultimate wisdom.

62. Of these two types of mind, only the formless mind subsists in the *jivanmuktas* as *atmajnana* destroys the formful mind composed of the three *gunas*; when the *jivanmukta* sheds his mortal coil and attains *videha mukti*, the formless mind rich in *sattva sampatti* also dissolves without residue in *Brahmasvarupa*. Thus the king, who became a *jivanmukta*, lived happily retaining only the formless mind and remained unswervingly in *kaivalya nishtha* by the grace of his *sadguru*.

These verses, depicting the life of the king-turned-ascetic in the fullest bloom of enlightenment, remind us of the celebrated works of Sri Sankaracharya, namely *Kaupeena Panchakam* (also called *Yati Panchakam*), *Praudaanubhutihi* and also Nerur Sri Sadasiva Brahmendral's *Atma Vidya Vilasaha*, which revel in the pinnacle of Realisation.

(To be continued) ▲

BOOK REVIEWS



KNOW YOUR REALITY Vol. I & II by Swami Virajeshwara (Hamsa). Published by Hamsa Ashramam, Arusoni, via Kelamangalam, Tamil Nadu, 635113. Rs125 & Rs100. ISBN: 81-900827-3-6 www.swami-virajeshwara.com

Pujya Swami Virajeshwara Sarasvati (popularly known as Hamsa Swami), is a man of Science, who has taken a deep dive from 'Computer to Consciousness'. The books under review are the compilations of his replies and clarifications given to the questions of the aspirants (*jignasus*). The replies present a perfect synthesis between scientific outlook and traditional wisdom of Advaita. Many of the questions have come from aspirants from the West. While going through these, we are reminded of the famous lines of Rudyard Kipling : "But there is neither East nor West, / nor Border, nor Breed, nor Birth," indicating that the spiritual wisdom is universal. Hamsa replies to the questions are founded on Consciousness which is integral to and extends beyond the ordinary spiritual dimension usually found in such compilations. These volumes are valuable additions to the Vedantic lore, presented with deep insight and compassion. The replies which are cogent and clear seek to remove the cobwebs in the minds of the seeker. These are primarily concerned with the questions like how to end the thought process, and related doubts. They seek to answer the age-old query of 'Who am I', which has haunted mankind from the days of the Delphic Oracle and which has been answered emphatically by Bhagavan Ramana. Hamsa helps the seeker through his replies, which exhaustively explain the various aspects of the mind. While going through the book, the reader is taken on a journey into the depths of meditation, plunging ever further into the Unknown. The insight is clear and a new light is thrown on the practical problems that trouble the practitioner's mind. His replies are sharp and lucid.

For instance, read the one on 'Transcendental Meditation'. Hamsa says, "Transcend means beyond thought, beyond mind. So when you transcend, there is no meditation, no mind, no thought." He advises the sadhaka to meditate on the 'Transcendental' instead of attempting to do 'Transcendental Meditation'. (p.90). Hamsa repeatedly insists on inner purity as a *sine qua non* for spiritual progress. The purification process prepares the sadhaka

to get ready to receive divine Grace. “Neither God nor Guru will wait a moment longer than you deserve.” This is a very positive assurance given by Hamsa to the questioner. He also advises the sadhaka to denude his mind of unnecessary knowledge of this phenomenal world which becomes an obstruction to ‘Real Knowledge’. This is a very telling comment from a person who had been a scientist himself, probing into the phenomenal world. He gives a very practical advice to the enthusiastic aspirant who wants to transform the world, “You may not be able to change the world the way you like, but you can certainly change yourself, change your outlook... and learn to put up with and accept events as they come... maintaining equanimity of the mind under all circumstances.” This advice is in line with the instructions of Bhagavan. The book is replete with further practical advice to the sadhakas on ‘how to lead a life of sadhana, how to overcome hurdles like anger, lust, avarice’ etc.

Hamsa in his replies, repeatedly stresses the importance of doing *nama-japa* (repetition of holy name) with absolute devotion. He maintains that this will be a powerful aid even for an Advaitic sadhaka. (p. 98 & p.167). He also emphasizes on the need for absolute surrender to Guru or God, “When the mind wanders...you have a God-figure to depend upon, someone to surrender your passion and ego...He certainly comes to your help.” (Chap IX). Hamsa also effectively uses similes, stories and anecdotes to embellish his replies and clear the doubts. Even complex ideas like the four states of existence, are lucidly presented. At the end of the book, the reader is reminded of the famous injunction by Madam H.P. Blavatsky, “The mind is a great slayer of the Real; let the disciple slay the slayer,” for it epitomises all the advice presented to the reader in these two volumes by a living sage.

— S. Rammohan



HEROES, SAGES AND MADMEN Seventy- Nine No Nonsense revealing Conversations about the Secret Teachings, Attitudes, Humour and Understanding of Spiritual Heroes, Sages and Madmen and the Way of Self-Enquiry by A. Roy Horn. Xlibris Corporation ISBN:1-888 795-4274. www.Xlibris.com

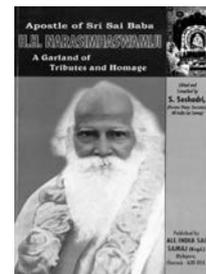
A.Roy Horn is an American who has lived a long and varied life, passing from childhood meditation,

fundamentalist religiosity, the Boy Scout movement and later, a career in the US Navy and a member of the elite commando Seal team. After studies and consulting work, he met several guides in his spiritual quest, including Sri Vigneshvaran, Sri Subrahmania, and Yogaswami of Sri Lanka. He came to Arunachala in 1982 and formed a deep link to Virupaksha Cave and the sage who left his body as *vibhuthi* in a lingam. He met several of Bhagavan's senior devotees and returned several times for extended periods. The book is a compilation of sincere questions from group sessions mostly in a Hawaii group. It is a tribute to the hero in the author that he was able to complete the book after suffering a stroke in 2004 that left his language faculties impaired.

The titles of the conversations are unusual: ‘Life is a Cycle of Breath’, ‘Dreaming While Aware’, ‘Already Wired’, ‘Ordinary People look Crazy’, and ‘The Theory of Relativity is Not Jewish’. The questions are specific to the difficulties and misunderstandings concerning gurus, methods and teachings as well as love, Self-enquiry, mind, peace, fear and anxiety. The answers range from generalities on the spiritual path that most seekers struggle with to specific insights into Bhagavan's teachings on Self-enquiry.

The author has a good grasp of the traditional teachings of Advaita. His answers are to the point and informative particularly in providing the perspective of a solid orthodox view that enhances each response to a question. His advice is based on the premise that practice is necessary to purify the mind. There is no place for woolly intellectualism. The practical down-to-earth approach is refreshing and one comes away inspired from reading this book, which contains all that one needs to know on the path of Self-enquiry.

— Eduardo Linder



APOSTLE OF SRI SAI BABA: H. H. Narasimhaswamiji. A Garland of Tributes and Homage. Ed. S. Seshadri. Pub. All India Sai Samaj, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. (7 full page photo prints) 2008. p.218, Rs.55.

The long and august shadow of B.V.Narasimha Swami (1874-1956) strides silently forward through generations of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi devotees thanks to his authoritative biography, *Self Realization*. In similar fashion he also moves through the waking

MOUNTAIN PATH

and dream states of the devotees of Sai Baba of Shirdi in this collection of short essays of homage, drawn from souvenir issue essays, birthday tributes, and other brief biographical sources and edited together into a celebration of his life for his 50th Aradhana in 2006.

Each short piece gifts us with new insights into his life. Many of these devotees and aspirants passed through the doors of his All India Sai Samaj in Mylapore, Madras. We learn that he was born in Bhavani, Salem District on the 21st of August, 1874; graduated from Madras Christian College; then went on to Madras Law College and set up practice after taking the Bar examination and over the years became a lawyer of high repute. That plaintiffs would prefer to obtain true justice through compromise in his 'private court' rather than in a court of law demonstrates Narasimhaswami's high degree of honesty, fairness and uprightness. We learn that as an advocate of Indian Home Rule he was arrested in Gibraltar while on his way to England to speak on this thorny political subject, and subsequently was returned to India, for fear that his powers of advocacy and oratory would have drastic consequences for the British Empire!

From these biographers we discover the tragedy that originally turned his life away from politics and law towards spirituality: the loss of his two children in a drowning accident within his own compound during a religious ceremony. He finished the renovations of the Salem Vishnu temple which he had begun and departed for Sri Ramanasramam to seek solace from Sri Ramana. Swami Sivananda writes how B.V.N. subsequently made Shirdi Sai Baba a household name, particularly in South India, through his 'ceaseless and vigorous propagation of the life and teachings of Sai Baba'. He accomplished for Sai Baba what Swami Vivekananda did for Sri Ramakrishna.

Due to this multi-author format there is plenty of repetition, and occasional hagiographical content, but enough fresh and personal information springs from each homage to make this excusable. Anyone interested in the life of B.V. Narasimhaswami will find new gems within these pages. It is a book that may be opened at random for inspiration, each brief homage flowing from one's personal experience and devotion to this remarkable man and a tribute to the path of outstanding faith his life was used upon.

— John Maynard



ASHRAM BULLETIN



New Roof of Sri Sundara Mandiram, Tiruchuli

Mahasivaratri

Mahasivaratri was observed at the Ashram on Friday, February 12th. Special pujas were offered at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine four times over the night, with *Ekadasa Rudra Parayana* for two hours before the third puja. The fourth and final puja was done between 4.30 and 5 a.m.

This year there had been some difference of opinion among Vedic astrologers as to the exact date of occurrence of the holy event. The ashram followed the lead of the Sri Sankaracharya Mutt, Kanchipuram and celebrated the event in February rather than March. Mahasivaratri is observed in the month of *Masi*. According to the Ashram pandits, when the fourth and final puja is offered it should be *Masi*. As *Masi* was born this year on February 12th during the fourth puja, we chose February 12 for the observance of Mahasivaratri. If we had chosen March 13, the month *Panguni* would have been born during the fourth puja.

Sri Vidya Havan

The Sri Vidya Havan was performed at Sri Ramanasramam with great solemnity and splendour on Friday, the 19th March. The *Havan* had, for some time, been performed in January when the weather was cooler. But now the date for the *Havan* has been permanently re-scheduled for the first Friday in the month of *Panguni* (March/April) which is the traditional time for this *Havan*. The Sri Chakra inside the Matrubhutheswara temple which was installed and consecrated by Sri Bhagavan himself is re-consecrated each year and thus the activities of the ashram and the dissemination of Bhagavan's teachings are re-energised. During the *Havan*, Goddess Lalita Tripurasundari is invoked and worshipped with rituals and chanting according to Vedic precepts and mantras, which had began in the early morning. The culmination of the ceremony occurs in the mid-afternoon after many hours of ritual chanting. Silk saris, gold ornaments, money, coconuts and lotus flowers are offered into the sacrificial fire.

The fires of the *homam* ascended with greater vigour and the devotees sensed and were blessed with the presence of the divine mother who according to tradition, rises out of the flames and blesses all present. It is one of the red letter days in the ashram calendar and the many who endured the hot summer heat, as they sat devoutly and attentively

participating in the ceremony, felt amply rewarded. The many *kalasams* of holy water which are consecrated during the *homam* are then taken into the shrine through an elaborate procession and *abhishekam* is performed on the Sri Chakra and the deities inside the sanctum sanctorum.

Bhagavan's Aradhana

This year is the 60th anniversary of Bhagavan's *Mahanirvana*. It was in this same Tamil year of *Vikruthi* sixty years ago that Bhagavan attained *Mahasamadhi* and left his human body to the grief of devotees.

In Sri Ramanasramam, *Aradhana* was solemnly observed on Tuesday, May 11th. Braving the sweltering heat in the middle of *Agni nakshatram*, hundreds of devotees thronged the Samadhi hall to participate in the solemn commemorative event. The shrine was decorated with flower garlands and lovely *kolams* had been drawn on the floors the previous night. The proceedings on *Aradhana* Day commenced in the early hours with the recitation of *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* and *Ulladu Narpadu* of Sri Bhagavan. This was followed by chanting of *Ramana Chatvarimsat* and the first *puja* of the day (during which milk is offered to Sri Bhagavan). From 4.15 a.m., *nadaswaram* musicians filled the Ashram with Carnatic music, at once scintillating and inspiring. Devotees were treated to breakfast.

After *Ekadasa Rudra Mahanyasa*, *abhishekam* was done to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam. Simultaneously *Mahanarayana Upanishad* was chanted. Special *puja* was performed, followed by *harati*, the finale around eleven. The *Maha abhishekam* took place on a grand scale with a variety of summer fruits and flowers galore and the *alamkaram* afterwards was splendid to say the least!

All the devotees were treated to three sumptuous meals on that day. In the evening, after another session of excellent *nadaswaram* music by visiting artistes, Smt. Ambika Kameswar rendered melodiously vocal music concert in the New Hall. She was accompanied by Tiruvallur Sri Parthasarathy and Umayalpuram Sri Kalyanaraman.

Devaram songs were sung mellifluously on May 10th and 11th by Tiruttani Sri Swaminathan and Kumaravayalur Sri Balachandran to the accompaniment of Tirupparkkadal Sri Parthasarathy on the violin and on the mridangam, Sri Yuvarajan and Sri Sivakumar on

consecutive days.

Sundara Mandiram

The house at Tiruchuli in which Bhagavan Ramana was born in 1879 and where he spent much of his childhood, was taken over in 1946 by Sri Ramanasramam, and inaugurated as the 'Sundara Mandiram', after Sri Bhagavan's father, Sri Sundaram Iyer and made a place of pilgrimage. This building which is about 150 years old was renovated. The inaugural function took place on 16th May 2010 in a grand manner with the participation of Bhagavan's devotees from many parts of Tamil Nadu and the citizens of Tiruchuli.

On May 15th, around 6 p.m., devotees sang Bhagavan's *Arunachala Aksharamana Malai* and songs from *Devaram* on Tiruchuli. On Sunday, May 16th, the programme started at 7 a.m. First, *Gopuja* (Cow worship), *Sri Ganapati*, *Navagraha* and *Vaastu homams* and then *puja* and *Mahadeepaaraadhanaa* were performed. It was also arranged that at the same time special *abhisheka* and *puja* were performed in a grand manner for Lord Bhuminatha and His Consort Sri Sahayavalli, the presiding deities of Tiruchuli.

Devotees gathered in the Temple and worshipped with fervour; the functions concluded with a lunch partaken of by about 2,000 people. The many devotees braved the exceedingly hot weather to attend the function. Sri V.S. Mani and Smt. Mani and other devotees from Sri Ramanasramam participated in this function. Devotees also came from the Ramana Kendra, Madurai, Muruganar Mandiram Ramanathapuram, and also from Rajapalayam, Coimbatore, Aruppukkottai, Tiruchirappalli and Pollachi to attend the function and receive Bhagavan's Grace. The devotees from Sri Ramanasramam afterwards travelled in a group to Ramanathapuram to visit the Muruganar Mandiram.

It was gratifying to see the denizens of this holy town participating in the function with eagerness and enthusiasm. A justifiable sense of pride too was visible on their faces. Swami Kamalatmananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission, Madurai, graced the occasion by his presence during the function.

