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74. ओ वर्णश्रममभातीताय नमः:

Om Varṇāśramamatātītāya namaḥ

One who has transcended varna (caste-distinctions) and asrama (stages of life).

Varna and asrama are concepts based on the body-mind. When one has ceased to identify oneself with the body-mind the question of one’s conforming to or departing from the rules and limitations of this conceptual system does not arise. The experience of Reality ends all conceptual distinctions. Frontiers and boundaries, elevations and depressions, exist on earth; the ethereal sky of satchidananda is one and indivisible.

75. ओ रसज्ञाय नमः:

Om Rasajñāya namaḥ

One who is the relisher of rasa (enjoyment).

There is a lot of difference between rasika and rasajna. A rasika enjoys beautiful things, he is a person of taste. A rasajna enjoys enjoyment as a mode of awareness and is therefore free from the triputi (triad) of enjoyer, that which is enjoyed and the act of enjoyment. In every act of enjoyment, his own or anyone else’s, Bhagavan saw only a manifestation of the one Being-Awareness-Bliss. He enjoyed not only what he as a person enjoyed but all the joy of all creation. God is rasa. Bhagavan as a rasajna knew God as rasa. Rasovaisah — He himself is rasa, enjoyment. He enjoys knowledge. He knows joy.

He does not merely know or enjoy objects. Like a good parent who enjoys the child’s enjoyment of a story, he is sukhi sukhitva.
The Photograph

It is said that a picture can paint a story that would take a thousand words. The photographs of Bhagavan and in particular, the famous so-called ‘Welling bust’ as seen on this issue’s frontispiece, tells a story that never ends in the eyes of Sri Ramana devotees. Words are insufficient to describe the electric impact on those who gaze into the eyes of that photograph. The stories of seekers from all corners of the globe who serendipitously stumble across this photo are too numerous to dismiss as accidental. All their stories strike the common note of absolute certainty. This, this, is what they were seeking. It is as if an invisible regulator clicked in their minds, and life was never quite the same again.

Sometimes it may take years before the next step, but always in the depths of memory a tiny beacon flickers, waiting for the propitious moment to come alive and propel us to take another step closer to that photograph’s invitation. It is not really the photograph that has magical qualities, but it is the key that unlocks the enchantment in us. We cannot describe this attraction; it eludes our flimsy attempts
to explain how and why it came into our lives but we indubitably
know it is true, as true as anything we may have seen in the world.

A photograph has the ability to radically alter our lives by touching
our deepest emotions and bringing to the fore strong sensations which
we tune into in response to the image before us.

On a collective public level, there is another photograph which
has influenced countless people and that is the large one of Bhagavan
erected on his couch in the Old Hall. At first appearance, it is just
a photograph placed there out of respect and yet those who visit
the room regularly see both in themselves and in others a gradual
realization that there is more here than the eye can see. We begin to
speak to the photograph in our mind, we prostrate to it, we worship
it and yet, although we know it is not actually Bhagavan, instinctively
we also know it is more than just a photograph, it is a portal.

Bhagavan’s face, viewed in the right light, is a door, a compelling
opportunity to merge with a higher consciousness, and we aspire
and pray for the stability that it can bring to our normal chaotic
thoughts. Bhagavan’s image makes us stop, it stills the mind if but
for a moment. In that silence, frozen between this solid world and
another, diaphanous, we are pulled both towards the photograph and
paradoxically, inward. We know something is happening but we don’t
quite know what it is. The subtle winds of transformation rivet our
attention and we are quiet. We feel we are on the edge of something
significant and sacred.

“B.: The Guru’s Grace is always there. You imagine it to be
something somewhere high up in the sky that has to descend, but really
it is inside you, in your heart, and the moment you effect the subsidence
or merging of the mind into its Source, by whatever method, the Grace
rushes forth, spouting as from a spring within you.”

We are faced with a dilemma if we want to explain what happened.
How can an object affect us so profoundly? It is not the image on
photographic paper; it is not the shape of the face in itself; it is not
our expectation of who Bhagavan is. It is the recognition of Bhagavan’s

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unwavering compassion. The function of the guru is to pull us into the Heart and this is what happens when we gaze with devotion at this form. It is when the ‘I’ of our Heart speaks to that external ‘I’ that recognition ignites.2

The first momentous step is to cross that threshold. No one can merge with Bhagavan until they let go of the false image they have of themselves. It is in this recognition that Bhagavan speaks to our own true self that we realize why we are so deeply affected by the image. It is a tremendous reminder of our natural state of abidance in the Self.

Bhagavan left us with four principal legacies: a road map to Arunachala both physical and subtle; his Samadhi with its mysterious powers of grace; his few words written and the records of his answers to devotees’ questions; and his images in the many photographs that are now available. Each of us is unique and for each the path to that transcendent silence he inhabits is also unique. Each of us has our own private view and understanding of Bhagavan and we choose that path which is best suited to our temperament. The paths may seem contradictory in the light of common reason until one sees the broader vision where all the apparent ambiguities are resolved in the luminosity of his sparkling eyes. Nothing matters then, neither the sharks of doubt, nor the sense of being an orphan alone against an unfeeling world.

Once a learned sastri (pundit) came to see Bhagavan and proceeded to speak. He talked at every opportunity for several days and gave the patient Bhagavan and the increasingly irritated audience in the

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2 “Although the concept of ‘I’-ness or ‘I-am’-ness is by usage known as aham-vritti, it is not really a vritti (thought) like the other vrittis of the mind. Because unlike the other vrittis which have no essential interrelation, the aham-vritti is equally and essentially related to each and every vritti of the mind. Without the aham-vritti there can be no other vritti, but the aham-vritti can subsist by itself without depending on any other vritti of the mind. The aham-vritti is therefore fundamentally different from other vrittis.

So then, the search for the source of the aham-vritti is not merely the search for the basis of one of the forms of the ego but for the very Source itself from which arises the ‘I-am’-ness. In other words, the quest for and the realization of the source of the ego in the form of aham-vritti necessarily implies the transcendence of the ego in every one of its possible forms.”  Maharshi’s Gospel, Book II, ch.6, 2000. p.64.
Old Hall the benefit of his erudition. Eventually he stopped. It is not recorded what he felt when he realized there was a limit to his knowledge. One would like to think he was abashed. We are like that sastrī. We come with our strange mix of hard-won knowledge and delusions of self-importance but in the end, we too are reduced to silence. Bhagavan’s presence does it to all, not deliberately but as the result of the unselfconscious glow of direct perception which illuminates the ignorant corners of our minds. We think Bhagavan is a body and mind with individual thoughts but this is not so. Bhagavan, for want of better words, is a force of nature. We have but a dim grasp of the pure consciousness we call Sri Ramana. We cannot understand Sri Ramana with our minds but we can dissolve the conflicting thoughts and emotions which act as barriers to absorption in that state.

One way to do this is through the image of Bhagavan. This is much easier for those whose hearts rule their actions. Even for those of us whose discrimination is finely developed there does come a point when one realizes that the intellect will never be enough to understand the deeper mysteries. We recognize that grace is absolutely necessary. We turn our gaze outward to that, which is readily accessible, the image of our beloved guru. We take comfort in knowing that a higher power in the form of Guru Ramana watches over us.

The photograph is not Bhagavan but it is an all-at-once invitation to dive deep within. It is just you and Bhagavan. What we think is what we become is just as applicable as the axiom, what we eat is what we are. The image of Bhagavan grounds us and the more we reinforce that relationship, the more his guiding hand is felt. There are no others until eventually in the intensity of the meeting, there is Bhagavan alone.3 All sense of difference fades in the brightness of

3 “According to a hadith qudsi, one of the Prophet’s sayings in which God spoke through him, ‘I am as My servant thinks I am, and I am with him when he remembers Me.’ (an alternative translation of this immensely significant saying would be: ‘I am with the opinion My servant has of Me, and I am with him when he makes mention of Me.’) Islam and the Destiny of Man by Chalres Le Gai Eaton, SUNY Press, New York, 1985. p.81.
‘his’ vision. Our sense of ‘I’ is dissolved into Bhagavan and if guru’s words of instruction are faithfully followed we realize our ‘I’ is one and the same as Bhagavan’s. There is no me and no you. There is just pure consciousness, pure ‘I-ness’. This is the stage of unification with the guru. At this point, notions such as you, and I, which imply separation and differentiation, lose their meaning. There is a ‘One’. This is the highest state of savikalpa samadhi for one sees the guru as one’s own self.

It is said in Sufi lore that man cannot say ‘I’ for he is not whole. Only God can say ‘I’. Though we may say, ‘I am this’ and ‘I am that’ this is second-hand knowledge. Our human faculties are but dull reflections of pure consciousness. Whenever we refer to anything other for our sense of ‘I’ to prove our existence, we immediately distance ourselves from the source. The ‘I-ness’ cannot be compared as it is unique. It implies “the identity of jiva and Brahman, that is, the oneness of adjunct-free consciousness and God. The same advaitic truth is also indicated by the vedic mahavakya ‘prajnanam Brahman’. [Self-consciousness is reality]”

It is not two and that is why on this physical plane it would be misleading to compare and vie with the deeds of others. In doing so we neglect what we are meant to do, our svadharma.

It is said of the early Persian Sufi Abu Yazad Bistami that after his death, he appeared to a friend in a dream and told him how God had received him. The Lord asked him: “What do you bring me?” Abu Yazad enumerated his good works, but when none of them were acceptable he said at last; “I bring Thee Thyself”. Only then did God accept him.

When we see an image of Bhagavan we should remember that Bhagavan does not see our limitations. Bhagavan sees himself in us. If we keep this in mind all our desires and fears dissolve in recognition that there is nowhere to go and nothing to do when we dive into that divine light. Let us give ourselves to Bhagavan.

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In an effort to describe the teaching of Sri Anandamayi Ma, ultimately one must confront the same dilemma as with presenting the teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi. The similarity between the two is at once apparent, for they both brought before us a path to the Knowledge of the Self that was transcendent and immanent. Thus in truth it can be said that, like Bhagavan, Ma was “all things to all people.”

A clear example of the similarity of their teachings is seen in Ma’s answer to the devotee’s question:
Question: What does Mataji consider to be the most essential thing in life?

Ma: To try to find out “Who am I?” – the search after God. But first of all one must conceive the desire to know oneself. When one finds one’s own Self, one has found God; and finding God one has found one’s own Self — the One Atman.¹

Sri Anandamayi Ma never wrote books or gave formal lectures, but always readily replied to questions either in public satsangs or in private council. The vast depths of Her words cannot be fathomed, and as She spoke from the highest possible vantage point, Her utterances are so universal that all doctrines and creeds can find refuge within Ma’s vision. Ma once said, “By whatever Path anyone approaches the Divine, this little girl heartily welcomes him!”²

All paths were Ma’s path, all possible known sadhanas and yogas had spontaneously revealed themselves and played within Ma’s person, making Her the repository of all spiritual Traditions and techniques. Ma instructed each person individually according to their specific needs.

Many said that Ma was not a Guru, for like Bhagavan she did not openly give formal initiation or advise sadhana to specific individuals – regarding all as One. But her effulgent ‘joy-permeated’ presence eclipsed the conviction of even the staunchest advocate of such a premise. Recording the same opinion about Bhagavan, Arthur Osborne once said:

“The specious theory that Bhagavan was not a Guru had simply evaporated in the radiance of his Grace. Moreover, I now perceived that, far from his teaching not being practical guidance, it was exclusively that. I observed that he shunned theoretical explanations and kept turning the questioner to practical considerations of sadhana, of the path to be followed. It was that and only that he was here to teach!”³

¹ Kedarnath Swami, An Introduction to Sri Anandamayi Ma’s Philosophy of Absolute Cognition, Om Ma Sri Sri Mata Anandamayi Peeth Trust 2010, p.78.
² Unless otherwise cited, all subsequent quotes from Sri Anandamayi Ma are culled from either Matri Vani (Words of Ma translated by Atmananda), or Sad Vani (Words of Ma collected by Bhaiji).
³ Osborne, Arthur, My Life and Quest, 2001, pp. 91-2.
If Ma’s collected sayings are studied carefully, it will be seen that there are repetitive themes that occur and some common advice that Ma offered to everyone. She repeatedly told that the sole purpose of human existence was the search for Truth and Its attainment:

“This body always says and will continue to say that it is man’s bounden duty as a human being to find God, to know himself. The search after Truth is man’s only expedient for attaining supreme peace.”

Bhagavan Ramana echoed this same truth in declaring: “If the Self is known all others become known. Hence is Self-Realisation the primary and sole duty of man.”

Ma even expresses it more vehemently: “If in spite of having obtained this great opportunity, one does not give time to the contemplation of the Beloved, one will have to ask oneself: ‘What have I been doing?’ To neglect the contemplation of Reality means to take the road of death.”

Ma most often recommended the repetition of the divine names as an effective means for realizing God. She often spoke of the great effective divine power inherent in all the revealed names and mantras.

“Listen! Do not let your time pass idly. Either keep a rosary with you and do japa; or if this does not suit you, at least go on repeating the Name of the Lord regularly and without interruption like the ticking of a clock. There are no rules or restrictions in this. Invoke Him by the Name that appeals to you most, for as much time as you can — the longer the better. Even if you get tired or lose interest, administer the Name to yourself like a medicine that has to be taken. In this way you will at some auspicious moment discover the rosary of the mind, and then you will continually hear within yourself the praises of the great Master, the Lord of Creation, like the never ceasing music of the boundless ocean; You will hear the land and the sea, the air and the heavens reverberate with the song of His glory. This is called the all-pervading Presence of His Name.”

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Although Bhagavan predominantly stressed enquiry into the nature of the Self, he never diminished the efficacy of japa as a means to realisation of Advaitic Truth. He did direct those whose temperament was suited to this sadhana to ‘make japa’, as is shown below:

D.: Can advaita be realised by japa of holy names; say Rama, Krishna, etc.?
M.: Yes.
D.: Is it not a means of an inferior order?
M.: Have you been told to make japa or to discuss its order in the scheme of things?
Silence.5

Ma often reflected on the essence of the Advaitic truth that the whole world is sustained by the One: “At all times the repetition of the Lord’s Name should be kept up. Through the practice of the Name enjoyment, liberation, peace — all these will blossom forth. With firm faith, implicit confidence and devotion, casting away pride, adhere to the Name and you will see that all your work will be done, as it were, of itself. Your burden, the burden of the world is ever carried by the One who sustains the universe. Remember this!”

A common misunderstanding regarding the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi is the belief that he never advised his disciples to take up a practice that involved mantra japa (continuous repetition of one of many sound formulas representing a Name of God). The truth is that such advice was given, though rarely, and even given to some of those in the innermost circle. In the memoirs of one of Bhagavan’s close disciples such an occurrence is recorded:

“Though Bhagavan rarely gave out mantras, when he did, he generally recommended “Siva, Siva’. Muruganar himself was given this mantra by Bhagavan, as were several other devotees including Annamalai Swami, the brother of Rangan (who was one of Bhagavan’s childhood friends), and an unknown harijan.” 6

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Muruganar continues, making special note of Bhagavan’s teachings regarding the use of mantras:

“Through grace, Padam (Muruganar’s epithet for Bhagavan) ensures that there is never any danger to those who remain in their heart, meditating ‘Sivaya Nama’.”

Ma also spoke often of the mysterious qualities of the breath and its connection with the mind, and the efficacy of meditating and performing japa in tune with the breath.

“From our worldly point of view we perceive everywhere animate or inanimate things; but in reality He who is Truth, He who is consciousness, permeates them all. As soon as the mind understands the fact of His immanence, He becomes active and vibrant within us, at first through the vehicle of the breath, which is an expression of the life-force (prana). Be ever aware of the following: what is called life-breath is really an aspect of universal, all-pervasive power that functions continually. It is indeed one of His forms; He who is Truth-Consciousness reveals Himself in this mode. If with the help of a mantra received from the Guru we can remain concentrated on the breath, or even without a mantra we simply keep on watching the movement of the breath, this will help to steady the mind and also be an aid in our search of Him who is the Life of our life, who is the Whole, the Eternal One.”

“Through breath energy, Consciousness pervades Matter. Everything that is alive breathes. When breath stops, you die. Physical life depends on breath. Through Prana, matter becomes alive. Desires and wandering mind make the breath impure. Therefore, I advise the practice of concentration on breathing combined with taking any one of God’s Names. If the breath and the mind become one — pointed and steady, then the mind expands to infinity, and all phenomena are included in that one all – inclusive point. If you think of God with the breath it will purify the prana, the physical sheath and the mind. If you breathe while thinking of God’s Name, you will feel the call of His grace.”

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7 Ibid., p. 224-5.
Bhagavan declared the efficacy of watching the breath (sometimes erroneously translated as breath-control) as a direct means for controlling and steadying the mind. One such instance is seen as a devotee asked this question:

“How is breath-control the means for mind-control?”

Bhagavan replied: “There is no doubt that breath-control is the means for mind-control, because the mind, like breath, is a part of air, because the nature of mobility is common to both, because the place of origin is common to both, and because when one of them is controlled the other gets controlled.”

Ma Anandamayi revealed that one means for attaining the illuminating knowledge of the Self is through profound awareness of the life-breath. Thus, she has said:

“The Self, or God is unknowable to the ordinary intelligence, but He is not unknown to us as the life-breath. If one uses the rhythm of one’s breathing as a support in meditation, this increases one’s power. Therefore, one should daily sit in a meditative pose in a solitary place and turn the mind inward, and repeat the mantra in rhythm with one’s breathing, without straining, in a natural way. When through prolonged practice, the Name becomes inextricably linked with the breath, and the body is quite still; one will come to realize that the individual is part of the One Great-Life that pervades the Universe.”

Bhagavan’s teaching regarding breath-control is clearly given in Chapter Six of the Sri Ramana Gita:

“One should control the fickle mind by controlling the breath and then it, like a tethered animal, ceases to stray.”

“With the control of breath, control of thoughts also is achieved. When thoughts are controlled one stands established at their source.”

“Control of breath means merely watching with the mind the flow of breath. Through such constant watching kumbhaka does come about.”

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But the most consistent theme which can be taken as Ma’s continual message was the repeated statement that all is a manifestation of the Divine. All that we experience, see or hear is only God in His manifest forms.

“The Universal Body of the Lord comprises all things — trees, flowers, leaves, hills, mountains, rivers, oceans, and so forth. A time will come, must come, when one actually perceives this all-pervading Universal Form of the One. The variety of His shapes and guises is infinite, uncountable, without end. Just as ice is nothing but water, so the Beloved is without form, without quality, and the question of manifestation does not arise. When this is realized, one has realized one’s Self. For, to find the Beloved is to find my Self, to discover that God is my very own, wholly identical with myself, my innermost Self, the Self of my Self.”

“In all forms, in all diversity and disparity is He alone. The infinite variety of appearances and manifestations, of modes of becoming and states of being, of species and types, all the numberless distinctions as well as all identity are but He Himself. All things are but an expression, a guise of the One.”

Understanding the synonymous nature of all terms relating to the Divine; whether they be termed manifestations of God, the One, Truth or the Self, we find Bhagavan emphasising that all action and the diversity and disparity of all human relationship is only a part of that Divinity:

“The only reality is the Self from where the ego appears, and runs through thoughts which manifest themselves as the universe and in which the mothers and fathers, friends and relatives appear and disappear. They are nothing but manifestations of the Self so that one’s parents are not outside the Self. So there is no reason to mourn. Learn it, realise it and be happy.”

There are five sayings that Ma repeated so frequently, they could be considered as Her ‘Mahavakyas’ or Great Sayings:

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MOUNTAIN PATH

• There is only one Brahman without a second.
• In the Divine is everything with no omission.
• To find one’s Self is to find God and to find God is to find one’s Self.
• All is the Lord.
• The Lord can be defined in whatever way you will: All is He.

Although Ma frequently also gave the advice to inquire into the nature of the “I” just as Bhagavan Ramana did:

“Who am I’. Once you sit down and ponder seriously over this question, you will soon discover that all the book learning that you have crammed into your brain and all the practical experience you have gained in active life are not of the slightest help in solving this question. Whenever the mind starts wandering, it must be firmly brought back to concentration upon the source of the ‘I’. This is the means by which to arrive at Self Realization.”

She also took the objective approach of telling people to pose the question to all of life’s appearances: “Who has come in this form?” In this way She recommended to see all as expressions of the Divine. When someone approached Ma with sorrow, She would say, “God has come to you in this form”. If someone came with joy or with gain or loss, they would receive the same answer. If the sadhak follows this view of life and the world, all begin to appear as the form of God and there is no further room for the ego or personal ignorance.

Ma encouraged us to continue in whatever line suits our inward temperament and longing, but to continue to the end.

“If you are a bhakta, sink your ‘I’ in the ‘Thou’; and if you proceed by the path of Self Enquiry, let the ‘you’ be drowned in the ‘I’.”

“The Self is reposing within Itself. In coming and going as well as in true Being is He alone. ‘I am indeed this blissful Self! I have to become established in Knowledge’ — This should be the only desire.”

And in conclusion, Ma assures us that She, as the Self of the self, is always there to help us:
“For this body only One exists; there is not even the possibility of a second. The Atma of this body is everybody’s Atma. It cannot be that anybody anywhere is not Ma’s very own!”

Likewise, those who lived with the physical presence of Bhagavan, as well as those who afterwards moved within His eternal guidance, find assurance that they too are never outside of His effulgent grace. Bhagavan freely divulged the relentless intention of His grace and compassion to all who came to Him with sincere hearts. Thus, He declared to those before Him as if proclaiming to all:

“Even if you let go of Bhagavan, Bhagavan will never let go of you.”  

Even so, when a devotee grew despondent at seeing no progress in himself saying:

“I am afraid if I continue like this I shall go to hell.”

Bhagavan, the Ocean of Compassion without Reason, tenderly replied:

“If you do Bhagavan will go after you and bring you back.”

Sri Anandamayi Ma usually refers to Her person as ‘this body’, thus in the same vein as did Bhagavan Ramana, She declares the assurance of Her constant guidance and protection:

“They imagine this body to be far away but actually it is always very, very near. How could it possibly leave anyone? The question of distance arises solely from their point of view.”

For Sri Anandamayi Ma, Self (Atman) is identical with Brahman; and so is the world. She says, “Often it is said by this body that you should know yourself or that you should attain yourself. But what exactly is the meaning of attaining oneself? It means to attain oneself as One—Whole. If something is excluded while attaining oneself, then one has not really attained oneself.”

“Whatever one says, that Thou art.”

“Thou Thyself exists in various forms, in various shapes and attributes.”

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12 Ibid., p.172.
13 *Matri Vani*, volume 1, translated by Atmananda. Part 1: General Advice, verse 44.
14 *Vachanamrita*, volume IV, pp. 258-259.
“When you find yourself, you find Him also, and when He is found you find yourself also.”\textsuperscript{15}

“There is only one Reality, one Self in which there is no other; and That thou art! Here ends all speech and instruction.”\textsuperscript{16}

Sri Sri Anandamayi Mata ki, Jai!
Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., vol. IV, p.243.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., vol. I, p.188.

\textbf{Shiva}

Ana Callan

My Lord of the Shimmering Limbs
My Candlelit Lord
My Lord of Divine Composition

You are the bird in my hand
when the hand is crushed.
You are my freedom, my truth,
you’re my undefiled love.

All the bells in my heart
and the chains in my gut
are clamouring for you,
for one life-giving touch.

My love is a flood of long nights,
of wild tears and blood.

It is a fire, a fury of flowers
in bud, erupting
in blossom through
the pores of my skin.

Where o where
can I hide now,
My Lord of the Mountain,
My One Lord of White Light?

The poems by Ana Callan come from her collection, \textit{The Boy Who Would Be Sage}. She may be contacted at \texttt{ana@anacallan.com}
The Vision of the Juki

Part Three

“Life as an Abundant Flowering”

Douglas Halebi

Remembering now the hashi nura or Gypsy Camp in the parasol pines of Lebanon, I think most of all of my beloved mentor, Uncle Noah. And I consider well what it was like to hear him, and his friend Magrupi, reciting the most alluring epics and romances, tales that reeked of age but reflected timeless and universal aspects of the human condition. These oral epics were presented as if they comprised a kind of sacred ritual, the language deliberately archaic, the poet’s words saturated in pain, sorrow and a spellbinding eloquence. I think of what it was like to dwell in that unique habitat and hear these amazing narratives, like the weeping of a nightingale in the ruins of the world. And of how it is in old age to find these tales dwelling inside of me, here and now. As if I had to journey to a distant land

Douglas Halebi was born and educated in the United States, with paternal relatives of Gypsy origin in the Near East and maternal relatives of Anglo-American descent in North America.
to drink a precious wine, well fortified and super-potent, capable of inducing in us both intoxication and a profound sobriety. I drank the wine many years ago, yet I find that it still intoxicates me at this very moment, as if I tasted it for the first time.

In this life our sorrows are deep, our regrets painful, our errors and deficiencies unending. We never attain a static, immutable perfection, never rise so high that we cannot be tainted or diminished and experience inner decay. And yet we have the power to induce in ourselves any *hal*, an inner state of being, we so desire. Or at least this is so sometimes. And we are privileged indeed just to be here, to partake of the splendour and sobriety of human life, taste its vast treasury of emotional states, partake of high strivings and worthy goals and embark on the quests of the immortal sages of bygone days. We ourselves, by the very fact of our existence, extend a lineage that began in a pre-historic time, underwent innumerable changes, survived various catastrophes and calamities, was no doubt almost cut short many times. But the ancestors of all the living surpassed themselves, surpassed their apparent limitations, enduring against all odds in a world of unforgiving physical laws.

And, as Uncle Noah said, “We are here, in a world of golden coated horses and high-flowering pines. Here, where we have the exquisite pleasure of pondering the meaning of life, the riddle of the grave, the heritage of the Ancient Shades (*pitare*, sacred ancestors), dipping into the well of memory to recall and recite the most glorious and sublime of our fathers’ epic tales. And we can serenade the hopeless, ever-aspiring human soul, honour great poets and worthy artists, praise Life itself, open ourselves to the stillness in the heart of a rose, linger in green meadows, rejoice in the stars that shimmer on the winding road to Mount Uludag, reflected as if in a pure mirror.¹ We can taste the burning lips of many a sensuous maid, father worthy children, love the earth and all its fruits. And never surrender ourselves inwardly to those who drank too long from a poison spring, bitter and broken,

¹ This road is said to have been rubbed smooth by the wheels of all the carriages that once travelled over it. Thus its surface resembles a mirror or a lake in its ability to reflect the stars in the night sky.
obsessed with revenge, pitiless in their condemnation of the world and everything in it. They are called in our language the intikash, meaning bent and broken ones, stooped over by the weight of their own narrowness. These intikash see the sun that has already set but never its rising. They expose deep, gaping wounds in man, but cannot abide the idea that wounds can be turned into fountains. And they experience everything in a tepid, inane, lifeless manner, never able to bestow a high value on anything or anyone. They live inwardly in a world without the sun, empty of inner light, deprived of illumination and profound insight. And so they have already failed as worthy critics of humankind. They take no pleasure in the grandeur of our gestures, the extent of our hospitality and mercy. They are feeble and broken, yet they sometimes have a following less debased than themselves.

“And this is especially the case in politics, where corruption and arrogance are deemed worthy qualities of a leader. So know that the wise man does not fixate on negation but on affirmation. That he does not despise this life but loves it deeply, incurably, with a thirst that cannot be slaked. Know, too, that it is better to find solace in the mountain air and the taste of honey than in all the promises made by the rulers of the world. And life far transcends their definitions of its limits, richer, vaster, purer, encompassing prospects and realities that exceed the scope of a purely political conception of man.”

Man, according to a saying I have often quoted, was meant to drink the water of knowledge from all the wells of the earth. There is no culture without some inherent beauty or wisdom (even if we cannot accept all its underlying premises), no world of man that is lacking in its own treasures. None that has not partaken of lofty goals and grand ventures, beyond the limits of mere material greed. And the ultimate artifact of a civilization is not the sword, but the book. The richest of books overflow with precious knowledge, provide us with an illumination of life, confer on us a specific orientation toward the world, the universe and the Absolute. The book bestows on us the gifts of historical memory, bears witness to the most intimate sorrows and the deepest desires of a time and a place we ourselves can never return to, stirs us to embark on our own quests, expands
our horizons and thus our possibilities as well. The book, enriches, instructs and entertains us in a thousand ways. When the last sword has been shattered in battle, books are still everlasting.²

Sitting on the library shelf books appear to be mere lifeless objects. But when we open and begin to read a great book it is quickened into life, as living as the grass of a new spring. We can be enthralled, even edified, by its living content. And a great book often bears witness to external events and internal struggles of man in ways that move us more deeply than we could ever have anticipated. To know the sweetness of honey or the bitterness of vinegar, no chemical analysis of its components will suffice.

We must taste the honey to discover its sweetness. So, too, we can experience vicariously, as if it were unfolding in our own lives, the honey and the vinegar known to others through the power of great literature, philosophy, poetry, even theatrical productions. These arts, as well as the speech and the alluring narratives of ‘primitive people’, pulsate with meaning. They are the life-blood of a culture, the source of many ventures and many dreams for man.

Let us never be so foolish as to rest content with unlearned caricatures and impoverished parodies of another culture, another world of man, when we could rather peruse something of its knowledge and know the pleasure of ruminating on its undiscovered grandeur merely by reading worthy books. The ancient walls of separation have crumbled away: but it remains for us to taste the water that now flows out, beyond these walls, nourishing the earth as it goes.

This life is like a spring rain-cloud that waters the land for an hour and then is gone. And yet it is also a precious gift, unlike any other. And of all those who aspire to deepen its meaning and adorn its passage

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²The horsemen who fought with or against Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar, ‘El Cid’, in 11th century Spain have long since vanished from the life of Spain. And yet, when we begin to read the archaic-sounding, sweeping epic, the Poema de Mio Cid, we are nourished by it as much as if we stood in the meadows and fields where El Cid once rode on his famous horse, Babieca, and wielded the sword called Tizon. The tale is as living as the sun that rises only here, only now, before our very eyes.
with passionate strivings, the Roma rank high. Our fathers, whether they were called Roma, Doma, Bosha or some other name, surpassed themselves many times just to be here. They endured catastrophes and calamities across time and space, surpassed the claims of hatred and spite made on them, and lived to flower anew, East and West. They learned to drink the water of life from gilded fountains and icy streams, and to savour the beauty that rises from the tall green grass every spring. Those who are called ‘Juki,’ still living in the Near East, are but a footnote in the life of this world. And only a single branch on a tree with countless branches, ripe and rich fruits and innumerable leaves.

However I can only speak intimately, actively, of this forlorn branch, for it is the one that nourished me from birth. So I can say that we, the Juki, consider this world like a cool taste of spring-water, to be savoured slowly, drop by precious drop, and with deep appreciation. The ‘Gypsies’ bring the gift of love of life, no matter what may befall them. So may every branch on this ancient family tree flower anew. May we travel through this world like a man hastening toward his own wedding-feast. And let us never cease to serenade beauty, honour wisdom and take pride in grand gestures and high aspirations.

And remember that the setting of the sun is already a promise of its arising. Remember that though the snow may fall in thick flakes, it does not endure forever. One day frozen rivers begin to thaw, grass sprouts up on the winter ground, the trees begin to ripen and the world ferments anew. The song-bird’s caroling greets the rising sun, and as our fathers once did, we begin to soar like the mountain hawk. May it always be so!

There are perhaps no people on earth who have a less developed ‘political base’ than Gypsies in the Near Eastern World. Most of them partake of a way of life lacking in a political dimension, without an orientation toward social, economic grievances that would engage them in political terms. So I think they are immersed in a somewhat different reality than the Gypsies in the West, who may or may not articulate political concerns or have well defined political goals. There
are, of course, various touchy factions, East and West, each with its own perception of the world and a strong sense of its own lofty status.

To do justice to the Juki, at least, we would need to have a more nuanced impression of them, to see that they cannot be adequately explained by traditional stereotypes. And that the round peg cannot be made to fit into the square hole. Man is a being laden with complexity, capable of not one but a thousand different flowerings. And as deep as their political skepticism is, I think we can attribute to the Juki certain social attitudes that could be applied, in a different setting, to politics.

I have no doubt that Uncle Noah, Magrupi, Orhan and Bulungir would say that a great leader is one who offers his wisdom to the people, like honey they can taste and evaluate for themselves. That the more ‘honey’ or fruit-bearing wisdom there is in his counsel, the higher his reputation will be and the more worthy he will seem. So his position is only enhanced through a process of free, spontaneous dialogue with the people. That it is not the talented visionary who fears unfettered debate and discussion, or feels threatened by the appeal to reason, knowledge or gentle persuasion. That only arbitrary tyranny needs to be defended by repression and intimidation.

So, too, that when a leader who bestows on the people not the honey of real wisdom but the bitter tasting vinegar of tyranny, they will also sample that and judge accordingly. The wisest of leaders, then, is more likely to be humble, resilient, ever open to new impression, capable of benefitting from intense debate. He does not seek out an immutable, monolithic conformity, but rather a rich and abundantly varied dialogue. Not all souls are patterned in the same way, but all may have something to give. The great Master would not be one who only issues decrees and commands obedience. He would rather be best qualified to lead, and to teach, because he recognizes both his own gifts and also the talents latent in others. And he would know, as Uncle Noah once put it, that “every soul on earth bears within itself an unrepeatable flowering.”

However, the distance between the Juki and the political arena is great. And there is also value in respecting that distance, in insisting that life itself is far richer than any purely political definition of its
meaning and its prospects. Our beloved teacher and his old friends despaired somewhat of the crude caricatures and the gross parodies that pass for authentic descriptions of ‘Gypsies’. And they urged us repeatedly to pay heed to nuance over stereotype, practical wisdom over rarified, abstruse theory about ‘what ought to be’ in the world. And like our grandfather, who had already become a committed expatriate in Spain, they were troubled by the catastrophic events that had overtaken the Near East, a once-great civilization that was now declining and fading, steeped in the grandeur of past days but now only a remnant of a world in abundant flower.

As for the modern, secular, westernizing world and its global ambitions, they said it had become so powerful that it invariably disappoints, seeming to promise a paradise on earth, a utopia for the future, but never able to fulfill such naive expectations. And for many who lived in poverty and obscurity, the world had become a gold facade, beneath which man is covered in dust.

The lifeblood of this narrative culture was the oral bard, bakshy or singer of tales, who is both a creative presence, extending and embellishing traditional narratives, and also the custodian of a sacred past, an age when man is said to have lived a purer, richer and more worthy life. The bakshy is likened to a dripping honeycomb and every drop of this delicious honey is said to be a different epic or romance. Or it may be a fairy tale, a paramhitisa. Wandering circuitously for as long as they could remember, lacking the ability to carry with them the possessions prized by sedentary man, and often unable to read and write, the Juki had cultivated the arts of speech and storytelling. They took pride in language as an end in itself, beyond utility, embellishing, polishing, refining and perfecting a purely narrative tradition. The greatest gifts of man were a capacious memory, so that the knowledge of the past could be preserved and jealously guarded, and a spellbinding eloquence that endowed even ordinary conversation with an amazing richness and delicacy of expression.

Beyond that, a ‘possession’ greatly valued was personal honour or prestige. And in comparison with it, material things seemed tepid, insignificant or even trivial. However it was not called literally a
possession, because in the Juki language there is no verb ‘to possess’. Man was not meant to acquire, to hoard up, but to share, disseminate, disperse and bestow. And then to acquire anew, if the need should arise. Excessive acquisition only encumbered man and deprived him of the freedom of movement which was itself part of a whole way of life.

Ancestral lore is filled with praise for the distant father of the Juki, and indeed these ancestors are continuously honoured, generation to generation, in the semi-annual Feast for the Departed Souls of All Generations. The Ancient Shades, *pitare*, were once living men, yet they existed in almost primeval times, closer to the creation of the world. They were therefore also closer to the Creator and this is reflected in the piety and nobility of such forefathers, who drank from a pure spring of wisdom, possessed illuminating knowledge and considered life, itself, only the material setting of a spiritual venture. The customs of these sacred ancestors are a lofty example to follow and we, ourselves, will never attain the fullness and plenitude of life known to these seers and sages. And this is in part because each succeeding generation is less worthy, less ripe and full than the one that preceded it into this world.

According to this view, in the most catastrophic and chaotic age of man, when his fall is complete, the holiness of the Ancient Shades will protect the Juki from ‘high courts and great armies besotted with ignorance’ and ‘kings who thirst for innocent blood’. Even now, it was pointed out, many rulers display an instant displeasure with the very existence of Gypsies but are often found to be little more than ‘a mafia’ themselves. They are so frightened of free men that they cannot abide their existence except if they are subject to extreme repression and absolute control. And nothing in ‘the days of ancient splendour’ and kingship compares in its debilitating effects to the rule of modern, totalitarian regimes.

And yet we are assured that when man reaches his lowest ebb he will rise again. The rose that is only beginning to bud will hasten into fullness and the Juki will journey over meadows and fields without end. Spring will be unceasing, the earth will ripen, men will live under the pavilion of the sky, drinking the water of pure streams, extolling,
praising, honouring the memory of beloved forefathers and cherished heroes. The Juki will flourish as if they had entered paradise. And man will be prepared to partake of the inner, spiritual journey for which he was created, leaving behind the dross of material possessions, advancing like a horseman mounted on a palomino stallion as he travels over roads that extend across limitless, ever-expanding space. All birds will be unleashed from their cages, “That they may know the freedom of the bard that has the whole sky to fly in.” And the quest for an illumination of life will at last bear rich fruit. The world will flower because the soul of man, debased and impoverished, is regenerated, swells with life and blossoms like the earth when it first rose out of the sea.

Someday I, too, will cross the ‘frozen river that never thaws’, enter the Village of the Ancient Shades, encounter long-remembered companions assembled at the banquet-table of the feast. And it will be as if youth had returned, and each one of us was drinking wedding-wine and eating wedding-cake at his own betrothal. And yet I have no desire to hasten across the frozen river.

All I can say now is that life is an immense, complex book in which we see many chapters, but never come to the end of the story. And suddenly we’re gone. But the tale is, indeed, astonishing. And we are all privileged to be here, to feel rain falling over our heads, drink water in a burning wasteland, engage in turbulent struggles, experience love, life, family, rejection, abiding bitterness and sorrow, but also high aspiration and the amazing, never ending beauty of the world. As well as the plenitude and perfection of great moments or fine days.

Perhaps, then, we should always gaze on the grass and the trees as if we had never seen such things before, and might never see them again? As if, when we thirsted for water, only the few drops we drink today would ever be given to us. As if we were fireflies dancing in the night, glowing for an instant of time and then gone. As for me, I don’t think all of our ventures will someday culminate in utopia, paradise on earth. I think the end of the road cannot be reached within the limits of this world, nor man contented for long by any treasure of knowledge or any sweet, sublime joy in life. We were meant to journey on. Not to accumulate, but to abandon and then acquire anew.
And words, our most precious possession, can induce in us as many different states of being as red wine, sublime music or hunger and thirst. According to the Juki, words, and especially the words of a ritual curse (solakh) can debilitate, poison and diminish us irreparably. The most potent curse is forbidden, most of all, because it may damage the one who utters it even more than its intended victim. And words were meant to be used with great delicacy, like a sacred utterance from a Divine Book. And if we use them well, ever respectful of their power, then our words may take root in other souls, and nourish them well.

Ramana Dying

Ana Callan

The pain of nations tucked under His arm, swelling just below the elbow, pus and blood and bone could ruin anyone but Him, who welcomes all suffering inside His perfect skin, which ripples now in breathlike tides over the rim of separation, flooding nothing but the dream flesh, His holy heart wide open to the predicament of human wedded to a form that does not exist, as He will slowly, quietly slip out of His phantom robes, arms luminous and limp, the heavens trailing silver tears in the wake of His ascension.
Having received guidance and grace from Sri Bhagavan as a young girl in the 1940s, Susri Dhiruben Patel went on to become an acclaimed Gujarati novelist as well as pilot an illustrious and diverse career as professor of English, foundress of a women writers organisation, foundress of two independent publishing houses, scriptwriter for radio, television, theatre and film where she penned lyrics, dialogue and scripts for internationally known productions and finally, recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Prize (for literature). Not having visited the Ashram since the spring of 1950, Dhiruben received encouragement from a visiting group of devotees led by Sri Vasant Kothari, who met her in her Bombay home in 2007. The following interview took place during her visit to Sri Ramanasramam later that year, much of which appeared in The Maharshi, Sept/Oct 2008.

My mother, Gangaben Patel, was a freedom fighter and a social worker. She was very badly shaken along with the whole family by a tragic misfortune that occurred in 1944. My eldest brother met with a drowning accident, which my mother witnessed from the
After a few months, Mr. Chaganlal Yogi suggested that she should go to Sri Ramana Ashram. At the time we were living in Santa Cruz, Bombay. When my mother came to Sri Ramana Ashram and saw Bhagavan for the first time, she was so much impressed that she came back to take the whole family. So that is how I, my father and my newly-widowed sister-in-law came to Sri Ramana Ashram.

Those were the days of World War II, around 1945, and en route, when we reached Villupuram, some British soldiers wanted to get into our first-class compartment, so we were asked to vacate. We were compelled to wait on the Villupuram platform the whole night. This was a very bad experience for me. In the morning we got the bus to Tiruvannamalai rather late, so it was almost twilight when we reached the Ashram. I was so tired and so dirty that my only thought was to go and have a wash and a drink of cold water. But my mother — oh, she was ever the dictator! — said, “No, as soon as you enter the Ashram, the first thing you must do is to go and have Bhagavan’s darshan.”

I was very reluctant, but those were not the days when children could argue with their parents, so I had to agree and obeyed my mother.

I came to the Old Hall where Bhagavan was sitting along with one or two attendants. Next to Bhagavan I saw a small vessel in which live charcoals were burning. At the time I was 18; now I am 81; but I still remember it perfectly: I took that one step into the hall to give my namaskar. I felt impatient and just wanted to get it over with as soon as possible. I was not interested in Bhagavan or having his darshan. But because I couldn’t defy my mother I had to do it. So with closed eyes, I just prostrated. But, then, when I raised my head, well...I can’t find words to describe what happened. As soon as Bhagavan’s gaze met mine, he looked at me and in that very second it seemed that I was annihilated. I didn’t exist any longer and there was a great sense of release and peace. There was light, though not a strong light. It was like a soft moonlight all around me with no boundaries and no barriers anywhere. It was as if I was lost in a sky of light and peace. And I don’t know how many minutes or how many seconds I was in that state; it seemed a lifetime. When I came back to my material existence, I just could not accept what had happened.
We stayed five days more and I had the darshan of Bhagavan many times, but that experience was never repeated. It happened only once. And yet, it made me think very deeply and continuously: “What was it? And how could I find a way to be in that state constantly?”

The next day when we had had our bath and sat in the hall along with the other devotees, Bhagavan was there and anybody who wanted to ask a question could do so. I wrote out two questions on a piece of paper and handed it over to the attendant. He then told me that I should sit quietly and I would get the answers. But being young and impatient I was unable to wait very long, so after some time I again bothered the attendant. I told him I was not getting any answers to my questions that it was not working. So I went near the couch where Bhagavan was sitting and insisted on getting my answers. Then, Bhagavan gave some response, which of course I couldn’t understand because he spoke in Tamil. There was a person to interpret and I asked him to explain Bhagavan’s answers.

By then I had read a little of Bhagavan's philosophy, so I asked first: “If two persons are lying down and one person has a dream of a tiger and he is frightened and the other person is awake sitting by his side, is it not the duty of the second to wake up the dreaming person so that he will no longer be afraid? Why doesn’t he do it?” That was my first question, to which Bhagavan replied that the dream state belongs to the person who is asleep and the person who is awake has only to wait for the moment of wakefulness occurring to the sleeping person. There is no question of saving the dreamer because in reality there is no tiger.

My second question was: “Bhagavan, when I look in the mirror for a long time and try to understand who I am, I don’t get the answer, but on the contrary I feel frightened looking at my own reflection for a long time. So what should I do?” Then he told me: “Don’t look in the mirror; why is it necessary to look in a mirror? Go inwards, think, and find out who you are.” All this took place on the second day of my visit.

After that we stayed for about four or five more days. And, well, being with Bhagavan and noticing his every movement and listening
to his voice is not easy to describe in words. Being there with him was the most wonderful event of my life, the foremost our first encounter when he looked at me and I was transported.

Years went by till I had the opportunity to come back again in 1950, knowing that Bhagavan was not well and that he may not get well. He was on his couch and there was a bandage on his left arm. People filed by in a single file, going quietly. So when I came near him I couldn’t help saying, “Bhagavan, call me again.” Then, with infinite compassion and immense love, he looked at me, saying only, “Sari, sari,” in Tamil. I didn’t know what ‘sari’ meant. But somebody told me later that it meant “Alright, alright.” But it has taken such a long time. I have now come back and I am sure that he has called me back. I have come after — how many years — almost fifty-seven years. And I find the Ashram beyond recognition; it has expanded so much.

I shall have to tell about a nephew of mine who was only two years old when he came here with my mother. Bhagavan, as usual, was going for his walk after lunch on the hill, and all devotees were standing in line. This young boy suddenly saw Bhagavan and ran towards him and took hold of his walking stick, and so firmly did he grasp it that Bhagavan was unable to budge. Everybody was aghast watching this and requested the child to go away and not to bother Bhagavan. But he didn’t listen. And for a long time he went on staring at Bhagavan. Bhagavan put his hand on his head. At once he let go of the stick and started weeping, not loudly, but tears streamed down his cheeks as he stood there just looking up at Bhagavan.

This same nephew we, unfortunately, lost three years ago, in 2004. When he was in the hospital he used to tell me every day, “Foie [Auntie], do you know what we are going to do as soon as these doctors are finished and I am able to leave here?” I said, “I don’t know, what.” He said, “We’ll go to Ramana Ashram. That will be the first thing we do. And only you and I will go.”

Now, physically, it was not possible because he is no longer here. So I thought that it is now my duty to go to Ramana Ashram. I thought that I will go alone, I will stay there and find out if Bhagavan’s presence
is still felt Whether I am here or whether I am there, or whether I am anywhere, I tell you I feel that Bhagavan is with me. And that is all due to the first wonderful moment when he looked at me.

My mother used to rent a cottage here and stay for two or three months at a time. She was such a sincere soul and a self-educated woman. She had very little education, hardly two or three years. Nevertheless, she learnt Hindi, English, Sanskrit and wrote in Gujarati. But when she came here she found that all this was of no use because Bhagavan spoke mostly in Tamil and rarely in English. But my mother had such an irresistible attraction towards Bhagavan and his teachings. She used to stay here and meditate very regularly, in spite of all the other work that she was doing. What happened to her here, what she experienced, she rarely spoke of.

Once she suffered from a paralytic stroke and was not able to speak at all. After a month and half, gradually her speech began to come back. But then it was not fluent and we could not understand her all the time. For example, if she wanted her shoes, she will ask for soap and would then sometimes get annoyed because we didn’t understand her. Everybody was depressed about this and felt sad that such a wonderful person as my mother had to end her life in this condition. All of a sudden I remembered the evening parayana and Upadesa Sarah and recited one or two lines before her. My mother was at once alert and picked up the recitation and concluded the thirty verses without a single mistake or single faltering. After this she was able to recite Bhagavan’s works and slowly she became normal. She wrote her autobiography also.

In her last illness she made me promise that none of us would weep when she goes and also that Bhagavan would be with her, and that I would be the one responsible for these requests. She insisted that I do this. So I replied, “How can I do that? Who knows when the last minute in a person’s life is going to be?” Still, she made me promise. And by God’s grace and Bhagavan’s blessing it so happened.

During her last moments I was there and this nephew of mine held a very large-framed photograph of Bhagavan before her eyes. She quietly gazed at the photograph and then turned her eyes and passed away.
MOUNTAIN PATH

For various reasons, sometime after Bhagavan’s passing, for about two or three years, my heart was full of agony. I had not studied Sanskrit scriptures or anything like that and so asked myself, “How can I find somebody who will teach me?” By great luck, I came across Sri Gangeswaranandanadji Maharaj in Mount Abu, who accepted me as one of his pupils. He taught me everything and gave spiritual guidance also. But whenever somebody would ask him if I was his disciple, he would say, “No, she is the disciple of Ramana Maharishi, but she is my daughter and I am helping her.”

It’s a very strange thing to say that I don’t feel Bhagavan’s absence. I feel that he is here. I don’t notice his absence. Perhaps it is because during all those years when I was away from Sri Ramana Ashram, I always felt that he was near me. And in my moments of happiness, in my moments of grief, when I was confused, when I felt that I have done something, I have achieved something, all these moments I have at some level communicated with him. And, I have received his grace, and now know that I am not the only individual who has. He has done this for everybody, for the whole of mankind. When you are really facing a big problem or have some big question and you don’t know where to turn or what to do, then Bhagavan really gives the answer in your heart of hearts. And in many ways such as this, I have always felt Bhagavan’s loving presence.

Now entering Bhagavan’s Ashram after nearly six decades, I found myself writing the following words to Bhagavan:

After fifty-seven years,
I enter your Ashram once again.
I do not miss you
Because you were with me
All the while.
But Bhagavan, where are your squirrels,
Or their children of the twenty-seventh generation?
Surely they miss those peanuts
And the touch of your lotus-soft fingers?
Perhaps you have also been with them,
And the peacocks trumpeting from the heights!
You cannot be away from them or from any other place.
You are the universal Consciousness,
Existence and joy eternal, O Ramana!

The Names of Lalitha

Ramesh Menon

Tanu madhyaa, just
a sigh where her waist might be,
or the plumbless void;
we worship you in Kanchi,
on the banks of the Niva.

Tamopahaa,
who draw back the seven veils,
expose the still flame;
you hunt the beasts in the heart
with arrows of silver fire.

High on the mountain
of secrets there is a lake,
clear as a mirror;
Manasa hamsikaa,
black swan on the quiet heart’s lake.

You live in the one
point of the first origin,
in the primordial freeze;
Bindu mandala vaasini,
bright seed of the universe.

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.
Today it is a commonly accepted fact that astrophysicists inform us that there are over 100 million galaxies in our known visible universe. Philosophers, religious aspirants, even ordinary everyday individuals ponder eternal questions such as, “What is the universe? Is creation real? Is there a Creator? What is Reality?” Paradigms have proliferated. What is what appears? The Matrix movie recently presented that the seen universe is but a computer programme. Others have posited that it is but a dream or perhaps a vibrating string or a hallucination or God’s sport (lilā), an illusion or an evolving (after devolving?) conglomeration of atoms. Where did it come from? What is its status? Is it real? Unreal? Both? Neither?

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Bhagavan Ramana spoke at different times, in different contexts, about three basic standpoints to the metaphysical problem of creation.

“The same truth has to be expressed in different ways to suit the capacity of the hearer. The *ajata* doctrine says, ‘Nothing exists except the one reality. There is no birth or death, no projection or drawing in, no seeker, no bondage, no liberation. The one unity alone exists.’ To those who find it difficult to grasp this truth and who ask, ‘How can we ignore this solid world we see all around us?’ the dream experience is pointed out and they are told, ‘All that you see depends on the seer. Apart from the seer, there is no seen.’ This is called the *drsti-srsti-vada* or the argument that one first creates out of one’s mind and then sees what one’s mind itself has created. Some people cannot grasp even this, and they continue to argue in the following terms: ‘The dream experience is so short, while the world always exists. The dream experience was limited to me. But the world is felt and seen not only by me, but by so many others. We cannot call such a world non-existent.’ When people argue in this way, they can be given a *srsti-drsti-vada* theory, for example, ‘God first created such and such a thing, out of such and such an element, and then something else was created, and so on.’ That alone will satisfy this class. Their minds are otherwise not satisfied and they ask themselves, ‘How can all geography, all maps, all sciences, stars, planets, and the rules governing or relating to them and all knowledge be totally untrue?’ To such it is best to say, ‘Yes, God created all this and so you see it.’ All these theories are only to suit the capacity of the learner.”¹

The subtlest standpoint is the theory of non-origination (*ajata-vada*). However, even this perspective is but an approximation to the truth. Gaudapada said, “*Ajati* is meaningful only so long as *jati* (birth) carries meaning. The absolute truth is that no word can designate or describe the Self.”² From this standpoint there is no creation, no birth, no death, no dissolution, no bondage, no liberation, and no one

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¹ Mudaliar, Devaraja, *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 15-3-46, Afternoon.
striving for liberation. It is the Sage’s experience that nothing has ever happened, simply because the Self alone exists. From this perspective, the (relative) reality of the world is not denied. A Sage perceives appearances like anyone else. However, the Sage does not perceive the world as comprised of separate objects. An appearance is not unreal merely because it is an appearance. The real nature of an appearance is inseparable from the Self and partakes of its reality. What is not real is to mentally construct an illusory world of separate, interacting objects. Sri Ramana would point out that the world is unreal if it is perceived by the mind as a collection of distinct separate objects, but real when it is directly experienced as an appearance in the Self.

The next perspective, for seekers who find the *ajata-vada* impossible to digest, posits that creation is simultaneous with perception (*drsti-srsti-vada*). According to this perspective, the world arises like a dream on account of a person’s own thoughts induced by the defect of not knowing oneself as the non-dual Self. With the arising of the ‘I’-thought, the world simultaneously comes into existence and ceases to exist when the ‘I’-thought ceases. The world only exists when it is perceived. This is a fact of everyone’s experience though everyone assumes that the world continues even when one does not perceive it — though no one has experiential proof of such. Upon awakening from sleep, the first thought a person has is the ‘I’-thought and upon its emergence, the entire universe consisting of objects other than oneself springs into existence. Once the ‘I’-thought, mistakenly taken as meaning ‘me’ (male, father, professor, thin, healthy, etc.) arises as the subject, then everything other than me becomes an object. In deep sleep, when the ‘I’-thought is absent, so is the universe. This is everyone’s personal experience, though they refuse to admit so. Sri Ramana encouraged his followers to accept this theory as a working hypothesis because, if one is constantly regarding the world as an unreal creation of one’s mind, then it will lose its attraction, its seductiveness, and it will be easier for that person to then maintain an undistracted awareness of the ‘I’-thought. Thus, this theory is ‘true’ in so far as the mind of an unenlightened person seemingly creates an imaginary world for itself. At the same time, from the standpoint of
the Self, an imaginary ‘I’ creating an imaginary world is no creation at all and thus does not contradict *ajata-vada*.

Finally, there is the theory, ‘what has been created is perceived’ (*srsti-drsti-vada*), which is the ordinary common sense view that believes that the world is an objective reality governed by laws of cause and effect which can be traced back to a single act of creation by a creator. This theory states that the world exists prior to anyone’s perception of it and that it is external to oneself. Sri Ramana only invoked this theory when the person he was speaking with was unwilling to accept either of the other two theories. Invariably, Ramana would tell such a questioner that the theory of ‘what is created is seen’ should not be taken too seriously, as all it does is to satisfy one’s intellectual curiosity.

“There may be any number of theories of creation. All of them extend outwardly. There will be no limit to them because time and space are unlimited. They are, however, only in the mind . . .

“Creation is explained scientifically or logically to one’s own satisfaction. But is there any finality about it? Such explanations are called gradual creation. On the other hand, simultaneous creation is instantaneous creation. Without the seer, no objects are seen. Find the seer and the creation is comprised in him. Why look outward and go on explaining the phenomena that are endless?”

Regarding the latter two standpoints, there is an unacknowledged assumption made by individuals who ask such questions that there is a person (Ramana/Sage/jnani/jivan-mukta) who experiences a state of being called the Self. One way of answering their queries is to point out that this assumption is nothing more than a mental construct, a delusion, invented by people who are deluded by ignorance, in an attempt to make sense of the Sage’s experience. Because they accept ignorance, and therefore multiplicity as real, they assume that there are Sages/jnanis, there is a state called liberation (*moksa*), there is a state called bondage. The truth of the Self is that there are neither Sages nor bound individuals, neither liberation nor bondage — there is only the Self. This is one perspective. Sri Ramana remarked: “An

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Ajnani sees someone as a jnani and identifies him with the body. Because the ajnani does not know the Self and mistakes the body for the Self, he extends the same mistake to the state of the jnani.”

Again and again Sri Ramana patiently and unmistakably denied these unspoken (even unknown to the questioners themselves) assumptions. What is noteworthy and a bit puzzling, is how few of his questioners were able to grasp, even intellectually, the purport of his replies. A number of important points are worth mentioning. The non-creation theory is an attempt to describe the jnani’s personal experience. Truly speaking, for a jnani, there is nothing to say and no one to say it to. It is only because a person assumes that there is birth (jati) that the jnani, out of compassion, opens his/her mouth and denies it — their words being but an intellectual statement or theory for the sake of the listener — the truth lies in the experience, not in the theory. One should not mistake map for territory, a finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself.

Secondly, the theory of non-origination is not a denial of the reality of the world, but only of the creative, causal process that brought it into existence. Sri Ramana often said, and his actions only confirmed such, that the jnani is aware that the world is real — not as separate objects, but as an uncaused appearance of the Self. The world’s appearance is perceived by the jnani, but it is not its appearance that makes it real; it is real because its appearance is inseparable from the Self. On the other hand, an ajnani creates with his or her mind an illusory world of separate objects by continually misinterpreting the sense-impressions it receives. In both cases, sense-impressions are perceived. Where they differ, and it makes all the difference, is that the ego, the me/my thought is absent in the jnani and present in the ajnani. Thus, the jnani perceives the Self, or better, reposes in the Self, while in the ajnani’s mind, thoughts create a false separation between the Self and the not-Self thereby ‘creating’ a universe of incredible multiplicty.

The simultaneous creation theory, though not as close to the truth as the non-origination theory, has an extremely useful aspect

4 Ibid., §499, p.479.
to it. While non-origination is a breathtakingly wonderful theory, it is more or less an intellectual theory. On the other hand, according to Sri Ramana, the simultaneous creation theory is a theory that can be *practised* and he encouraged his followers to accept it as a working hypothesis. If one accepts the idea that the world is an unreal creation of the mind, then it will begin to lose its attractiveness, thus making it easier to focus on the source of the ‘I’-thought.

Sri Ramana remarked on many occasions when individuals would ask about which of the gradual creation theories are correct:

“D: There is one process of creation mentioned in the Upanishads and another in Puranas. Which of them is true?

*M.*: They are many, and meant to indicate that the creation has a cause and a creator should be posited so that one might seek the cause. The emphasis is on the purpose of the theory and not on the process of creation. Moreover, the creation is perceived by someone. There are no objects without the subject, *i.e.*, the objects do not come and tell you that they are, but it is you who says that there are the objects. The objects are therefore what the seer makes of them. They have no existence independent of the subject. Find out what you are and then you understand what the world is. That is the object of the theory.”

The important point to be noted in the gradual creation theory, with its myriad variations, is that it generally only serves to satisfy intellectual curiosity. Sri Ramana said:

There are only two ways in which to conquer destiny or be independent of it. One is to enquire who undergoes this destiny and discover that only the ego is bound by it and not the Self, and that the ego is non-existent. The other way is to kill the ego by completely surrendering to the Lord, by realizing one’s helplessness and saying all the time, “Not I, but Thou, O my Lord”, and giving up all sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and leaving it to the Lord to do what he likes with you. Surrender can never be regarded as complete so long as the devotee wants this or that from the Lord.

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5 Ibid., §387.
Ulladu Narpadu

Based on Lakshmana Sarma’s Commentary

Verse Thirty One

S. Ram Mohan

What work is there that remains to be done for Him, who have extinguished their ego and are immersed in the bliss of Identity with the Supreme Reality? He recognizes nothing apart from the Self. How can one even imagine His State?

Commentary

The jivan-mukta has no mind because he is egoless; the mind has dissolved, along with its root-ego, in Brahman or Self. The jivan-mukta is of the same nature of sat-chit-ananda as Brahman. Whatever desires and enjoyments one can possibly think of, are contained in the bliss-aspect of Brahman. In fact all the enjoyments that the souls experience in all the various worlds are but infinitesimal fractions of

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this *Brahman ananda*. Sri Sankara, in his *Maneesha Pancakam* says that even Indra, the chief of gods does not enjoy even a micro-atomic dimension of the great bliss enjoyed by the *jivan-mukta*. Hence the *jivan-mukta* is styled as *apta-kama*, one who has conquered all his desires. In fact, there is nothing in the phenomenal world he/she desires. A *jivan-mukta* is ever contented, *nitya-tripta*. There is no wave of desire. He is like a waveless ocean. There is no desire or thought to break his infinite tranquillity. He is not even subjected to the sway of ambition to reform or uplift the world. He is the one portrayed by Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*.1

Desires can arise only in connection with the gross or the subtle-body. A *jivan-mukta* does not identify himself with the desires. For him, they are not real. Hence, he is also styled *akama* (desireless). Only those who think the gross and subtle bodies are the Self would undergo the enjoyment and the pangs of its counterpart, suffering. Since the Self is itself bliss, the *jivan-mukta* always enjoys bliss in the state of identity with the Self. Hence he is, styled *atma-Rama*. Not having intentions or indecisions, which are mental modifications, and never entertaining the notion of the doer of actions, he is free from any mandatory compulsion to perform any act, and is not bound by any duty. Even the sacred lore that enjoins righteous action does not concern him. Doing right or wrong things arises only when there is an ego which propels their performance. In the *Supplement to the Forty Verses*, the egoless *jivan-mukta*’s freedom from the body sense, is itself styled as *dharma*; therefore, books delineating *dharma* (righteousness) are not needed for him. He is beyond right and wrong. This is the meaning conveyed in the first clause of the verse, which means that he has accomplished the end of all actions and therefore has no duty to perform. That is, he is *krita-kritya* (*krita* means accomplished; *kritya* means actions).

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1 “He is established in peace, into whom all desires enter as water enters the ocean which, filled from all the sides, remains unmoved; not ‘the desirer of desires’.
“ That Yogi who is established in peace, who, abandoning all desires, moves about without longing without the sense of ‘I-ness’ and ‘my-ness’.” *Bhagavad Gita* 2.70-1.
But at the same time the *jivan-mukta* has not deliberately chosen inaction. If he does any action, he is not looking forward to any fruit of the actions and hence the actions do not bind him, as they do others. The difference between the *jivan-mukta* and the bound-ones who wallow in ignorance, consists principally in his being totally egoless; all the differences proceed from this.\(^2\)

Because of the ego, there arises the idea of differences between oneself and others. A *jnani* or *jivan-mukta* has transcended this basic difference of ‘I’ and ‘others’ and is therefore beyond all differences.

When a *jivan-mukta*, by destroying the ego through Self-realization, functions in the world, whatever comes out of him will be nothing but a spontaneous expression of the Self. He is no more a separate person. His individuality is merged in the totality of *Brahman* — the cosmic consciousness. To others around him, he may appear as the same person as before Self-realization; but for himself, he is the Supreme-Self, all-enveloping *Atman*.

As Bhagavan says, the Self is everywhere, in every being as the same entity; but the veil of ego obscures it. But in a *jivan-mukta* the ego is destroyed and the Self shines in all its resplendence. His physical body is first a tool in the hands of the cosmic consciousness. It is the channel through which grace flows to uplift others. What duty or functions has such a *jivan-mukta* to perform in the world? What has he got to benefit from any work? The will to perform work exists only when a man assumes that world and others exist apart from him. Realization dawns when the world is seen not an entity separate from the Self, but only as its manifestation. The concept of so-called duty or work vanishes. Yet, even if the *jnani* stands neither to gain from

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1 There is the popular incident of Bhagavan’s learned followers. Once, during a walk on the hill, they were discussing what *nishkamya karma* (desireless action) is. Bhagavan, who was silently walking with them, picked up one gnarled stick which had fallen from a tree and using a knife, carefully removed the upper skin, elegantly shaped it and polished it with emery paper. Shortly, a walking stick was shaped out of the crooked-stick. After having laboured so much to perfect the stick, Bhagavan simply called a shepherd-boy walking nearby and gave him the walking stick. The devotees now knew the meaning of *nishkamya karma* and walked silently on.
performing any work nor to lose from abstention from it, his body will be functioning spontaneously as an expression of Destiny. It is a transcendent state where the only feeling that exists in him is pure love for all — *advaita-bhava*, the realization of the unity of existence. He does not recognize anything in the world apart from the *sat-chit-ananda*. Bhagavan raises a rhetorical question here: “Is there anybody in the world who can imagine and understand the *jnani*’s state?” Although you can perceive the body of a *jnani*, you cannot understand his true state which is beyond cognition by a conditioned mind.

Such a *jnani* works in this world with the natural spontaneity of a child which smiles, because it is its very nature to smile. For the *jnani* action and inaction are the same. When he does work, he performs it far better than others because he is free from the disturbing interference of the moods of the mind, desires, fear and the like. Bhagavan himself has told Lakshmana Sarma that he is called both the non-doer (*akarta*) and great-doer (*maha karta*). Because even while doing actions, he does not think ‘I am doing this’. Hence he is described as *akarta*. Because he does work perfectly well, he is called *maha karta*. Bhagavan’s very life is a testimony to this. Whatever he did, whether preparing dishes in the kitchen, stitching notebooks from left-over papers, treating a dog with broken leg, mending the cracked egg of a bird and nurturing it to hatch, making delicious chutney out of hard as nails stems of eggplant, carving a walking stick out of a stunted wood — in every action of his, we can see a spontaneous perfection.

Because the *jivan-mukta* is free from the idea of other-beings existing separate from him, he is said to have the unique quality of *samatva*, equality.

The poet-saint Muruganar epitomizes this state of a *jnani*:

The sage’s silent firm abidance  
As Self-awareness which succeeds  
The ego’s death, Brahman’s own state  
Of Bliss Supreme, the total absence  
Of another — this experience/  
None can understand.³

³ *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, verse 1151.(Tr. Prof. K. Swaminathan)
The Awakening of Oneself

Domingos Vieira

The little train had departed from Montreux, where the famous music festival was going on. It was a sunny day, and the beautiful landscape of the Swiss Alps was generously available for the delight of the travellers. Our destination was Saanen, where J. Krishnamurti would give a series of his annual talks. The year was 1982.

I was in great expectation about this meeting. I had been diving deeply into the ocean of self-investigation following Krishnamurti’s suggestions, and the feeling of urgency to go out of the prison of the ego was almost unbearable.

Since I was a boy, there was interest in spirituality. By the time I was twenty, I had read Paul Brunton’s *A Search in Secret India*, Arthur Osborne’s *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*, and Mouni Sadhu’s *In Days of Great Peace*. These readings caused a tremendous impact on me. It was very clear that there was something really sublime about Arunachala and
Sri Ramana Maharshi. I felt I had found my way and was at home in that atmosphere. But, apparently, I could not then investigate as Sri Ramana prescribes. It seemed to me that there was nothing with which to begin. So I practised some yoga, and discontent brought me to the teachings of Krishnamurti. They caused great turmoil and a revolution in my life, and discontent seemed to reach its extreme. I thought maybe if I talked personally to Krishnamurti, I could better understand the whole picture and go more easily out of the jail of the ego, putting an end to desperation. Hence this voyage across the mountains. Happenings adjusted themselves favourably for the enterprise.

Saanen was prepared for the gatherings — a very hospitable and beautiful little town, with agreeable summer weather, placed in a splendid scenario. People from all walks of life and from the entire world were there to participate in the talks.

During my stay in Saanen, I was living in the school that the municipality put at the disposal of the Saanen Gatherings Committee. On the day of the first meeting there was great activity there, with people preparing themselves for the talk. Early in the morning, there were several people near the entry to the large tent erected beside the road to Gstaad, and someone told me that many of them wanted to sit on the floor near the platform in which Krishnamurti would be seated. I decided to sit there too.

K entered the tent. The first impression I had was that he seemed to be something like a bird. A friend of mine, also from Brazil, told me that he had the impression of a drop of water. These two impressions are related to simplicity and completeness. K sat quietly, looked at his audience, and began to talk.

Some ‘strange’ things happened during the talks. In one of them, I didn’t understand one of the words he used. At once, he looked at me and enumerated some of its synonyms. Mentally, I said ‘I understand now,’ and he continued the talk. Another friend from Brazil told me that he conversed mentally with K during the talks, asking questions and obtaining answers, and I told him I knew what he was talking about.
At a certain point during each of the talks, I used to feel a kind of expansion of consciousness. I decided to perceive in one of them the exact moment when this started. While I was hearing the talk, I was also attentive in order to perceive the passage to the other state of mind. It took more time to happen and, being absorbed by the talk, I could not perceive the exact moment of the change.

I told some people about my desire to talk to K personally. They said this was very difficult to get. A friend from Germany told me this was impossible.

At the end of one of the talks, I approached K while he was walking toward the car taking him to Gstaad. When I came near him and he looked at me, it was as if my mind had been switched off. I perceived the mind slowing down and almost stopping working. Every problem disappeared. He asked me, “Where are you from?” I replied and told him it was one of my greatest desires in life to see him and talk to him, and we walked a little together before he entered the car.

After that, in one of the days between the talks, I went to Gstaad, with the determination to talk with him personally at Chalet Tanneg. I knocked at the door and a woman opened it. (Mary Zimbalist told me in reply to a letter I sent her that she was that woman.) I told her I wanted to talk to Krishnamurti, and she replied that there were about two thousand people wanting to do the same thing and, besides, he was resting and had to prepare the next talk. I replied, “Please, tell him that someone from Brazil is here and wants to talk to him.” She smiled, asked permission to, and closed the door.

Krishnamurti came out of the chalet. I repeated what I said before, and he said, “You told me this yesterday.” I smiled, he came near, put one of his arms over my shoulder, and we walked together. He asked me what I wanted from him. I replied that I wanted to understand the whole thing. So we had some dialogue without verbal words; it was as if we were using words, and we were, only there was not verbalization. I asked him mentally, “What is all this?” meaning universe, world, people, nature, search, everything. The reply came from great depths and without verbalisation: “I also don’t know.” The limitation of knowledge became astonishingly evident. We walked a little more,
then stopped and talked with verbal words; after a few moments we walked towards the door of the Chalet. Then he took my right hand, brought it to the right side of my chest (later I understood that it was as if he were saying, “You yourself are awakening yourself”) and told me, “You go and hear the talks.” There was a kind of deep silent explosion within myself. He stared at me and I thanked him, making pranam. Compassion arose in me. As I was walking down the hill towards Saanen, I began to worry about why I had gone there to disturb him, an 86-year-old man who was resting at home. At once, I heard his voice in my mind, saying very strongly, “Don’t worry about that. It had to be so.” All worry disappeared. There was only happiness and compassion. This seems to resound till today.

One or two days later, I was telling my German friend about this meeting. We were talking about K’s teachings and walked towards the tent in which a K video was being played. As we came near the tent, we heard the voice of Krishnamurti in the video saying “Nothing is impossible.” Both of us laughed.

After the talks, I returned to Brazil. Life went on with its challenges, pleasures and pains. I began to understand better what was related to self-investigation. At a certain point, not long after my return, I had an insight concerning the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. I perceived I was beginning to understand some of the facts he points out.

I picked up Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi and began to read it. From that day on, I’ve dived deeply into the ocean of consciousness, perceiving each time more clearly what Sri Ramana was saying.

The investigation functions like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre, itself being destroyed in the end.

“A day will dawn when you will yourself laugh at your past efforts. That day on which you laugh is also here and now,” said Bhagavan Ramana.

One can say with all humility that this day has already come.
When Muruganar composed *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, modelling it on Manikkavachagar’s *Tiruvachakam*, he sometimes adopted his literary predecessor’s practice of using the routines and games of young girls as vehicles for spiritual teachings. The seventh poem of *Tiruvachakam*, for example, is intended to be sung by young women taking a morning bath; number thirteen is meant to be sung while gathering flowers for Siva; the eighth, eleventh and twelfth are meant to be sung while playing long-forgotten village games. And so on. In all these games the women symbolise the *jivas* who are striving for union with Siva.

‘Tirukkannokkam’ – meaning ‘The Gaze of the Divine Eye’ or ‘Looking at the Divine Eye’ – is a poem from *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* (verses 1612 to 1643 in the original) that invents a new game for girls: *kannokkam*, looking into the eyes of Bhagavan in order to attain liberation. In every verse Muruganar exhorts devotees to take up this practice. As an added incentive to play the ‘divine-eye’ game...
Muruganar recounts in some of the later verses how he himself was liberated by a grace-filled look from Bhagavan.¹

You whose eyes are blue water lilies!
Have you not seen with those very eyes
the tree of true jnana that,
though rooted in the earth in beauty,
bestows the glance of grace?
With mighty shoulders branching out
he casts his glance
upon the beings of the world!
With Venkata, this wish-fulfilling tree of heaven,
let us play kannokkam!

¹ The translation of the verses was done by T. V. Venkatasubramanian, Robert Butler and David Godman. An annotated version of Tirukkannokkam can be found at sri-ramana-maharshi.blogspot.com

In Tamil poetry blue water lilies generally denote the eyes of young female devotees. The second half of this verse compares Bhagavan’s physical form to the celestial wish-fulfilling tree that grants the wishes of all who approach it. Venkata is a diminutive form of the name Bhagavan was given by his family.

Poor ones, you may surely attain
that which you desire in the way you desire it!
Through the unique state of sleeping in the Heart
with attention perpetually fixed within it,
his eyes are unblinking, like those of the plump fish
that bask in the luxuriant tanks of this earth.
With Ramana, let us play kannokkam!

Damsels whose humble speech is sweet like music!
You whose eyes are like fresh water lilies!
He is the eye of undivided consciousness
which cannot be described by girls like us
who in our ignorance think thoughts without number.
With Ramana, let us play kannokkam!  

He is the eye;
he is the iris of the eye;
he is the uncreated pupil within it;
he is the gaze of that pupil!
He is the heavens, and their jewel, the Sun!
He is the eye that is other than all of these!
With Ramana, let us play kannokkam!  

The phrase ‘he is the gaze of that pupil’ can also be translated as ‘he is the dance of that pupil’.

He is the number and the letter
that are regarded as the very eyes of humanity
by the learned of the world.
Yet, as the eye of being-consciousness-bliss,
his nature cannot be seen or known
by anything at all!
With Ramana, let us play kannokkam!  

‘Number and letter’ are the Tamil equivalent of the three ‘r’s. The first two lines contain a reference to Tirukkural verse 392: ‘These two, number and letter, say [the wise], are the eyes of living beings.’

He is even the eye of the eyes
of Vishnu and Kannappa,
who both had beautiful eyes.
Damsels, you who have the eye of discrimination
in this great and vastly spacious world!
So that all your five senses
may be usurped by the sense of sight,
with Ramana let us play kannokkam!
In separate incidents both Vishnu and the Tamil saint Kannappa offered their physical eyes to Siva as an act of devotion.

He is the siddha who performs the dance of supreme jnana, and bestows upon us the life of grace, saying: ‘See, this great and vastly spacious world is a mere trick of sight!’; thus rendering heaven, earth and the nether world a prey to the supreme firmament of true jnana!

With him who bears an eye upon his forehead, with Venkata, let us play kannokkam!

Sisters of ours! When the eyes of lovers merge in the act of seeing, of what use are spoken words that are not fashioned within the heart? So that no purpose will be served by the music of the spoken word, with him who with his eyes brings us under his sway, with Venkata Ramana let us play kannokkam!

Tirukkural verse 1100: ‘When [lover’s] eyes meet with [lover’s] eyes, their gaze in mutual accord, there is no need whatsoever for the spoken word.’

The same idea was also recorded by Muruganar in Guru Vachaka Kovai, verse 286: ‘The Guru abides as the silent benefactor who reveals the light that shines as the one and only eternal residue. If his eyes and the eyes of the disciple meet in total harmony, spoken words are redundant.’

In the form of the seer he has infiltrated sight. The seeing of those who look upon him with [individualised] vision will not be rewarded. Those who do not see in this way see him. He, therefore, has an eye that cannot be seen.
So that the [individualised] vision,  
the obstacle to seeing him, is banished,  
with Ramana, let us play kannokkam!

You whose ornament  
is the longing for the bliss of liberation  
whence there is no return!  
You who are like the golden-red lotus!  
With him who rules the world of liberation  
and who possesses the infinite eye of true jnana,  
with Venkata, let us play kannokkam!

Possessing a cool compassion that extinguishes  
all the intense suffering in which they writhe,  
he is the sun of jnana that dispels in his followers  
their densely compressed darkness of ignorance.  
You devotees! With a gaze that, uninterrupted,  
sees him as not-different from yourselves,  
let us play kannokkam with Venkata,  
he who holds as his umbrella  
the mind, fully inward turned!

Our sisters who steadfastly abide  
in the service of Ramana!  
So that the personal self and the supreme Self  
may merge together as one,  
abolishing all our doubts,  
just as the light of the eye merges  
with the unfailing light of the sun,  
with our protector, Venkata Ramana,  
let us play kannokkam!

You who do not know a single iota of enjoyment  
other than the jnana experience that rises  
in the eyes of Venkata Ramana,
the treasure house of wisdom!
You who, like the chakora bird,
possess this beneficial virtue of surpassing excellence!
With him who possesses a beautiful face
like the full moon that never wanes,
with Ramana, let us play kannokkam!

The chakora is a mythical bird that feeds exclusively on moonbeams. In this verse the girls are exhorted to eat the moonbeams that emanate as rays from the eyes of Bhagavan's full-moon face.

Artless maids, he is the great tapasvin
who with his sword-like eyes
cuts away [the root of] our delusion.
So that the lotus [of his eyes] blossoms
in the blue water lilies [of your eyes],
and those fragrant blue water lilies
blossom beautifully too
in the expansive lotus [of his eyes],
with Venkata Ramana let us play kannokkam!

In the same way that blue lilies denote the eyes of devotees, the lotus, in Tamil poetry, denotes the eyes of the Guru.

See, he is the liquor fit to be drunk
without a qualm even by brahmins!
Whether one meditates upon him, not rejecting him,
experiencing supreme bliss,
or whether one looks upon him
without accepting him inwardly at all,
it bestows a joy that no heart can contain.
With that intoxicating wine, Ramana,
let us play kannokkam!
You who distress yourselves thinking:
‘Is there salvation in death,
or does it lead merely to birth again?
By what means may we truly live?’
Here is such a means:
with focussed attention, let us play *kannokkam*
with Venkata Ramana, our Lord!

Just as, for the two eyes of the crow
there is only one iris,
similarly Ramana rests
in the chamber of my heart
as the witness of the two states
[waking and sleep] that assail me.
In order that he, who is the Lord
even of dark-hued Vishnu,
the protector of this vast universe,
may flourish and shine,
let us with Ramana play *kannokkam*!

*In Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, §313, Bhagavan says: ‘There is the belief that the crow rolls only one iris into either eye to see any object. It has only one iris but two eye sockets. Its sight is manipulated according to its desire.’*

You whose tresses are dark and fragrant!
The sun [of *jnana*], Venkata,
came as the rain of grace
to save the languishing crop
of the souls of his devotees.
In order that the darkness of ignorance
that subsists in the cavity of the Heart-bud
may be destroyed,
with him let us play *kannokkam*!
My mind debased,
I was like a pair of dice,
rolling unceasingly over this earth,
being born and dying again in my delusion,
until he, as the master of jnana,
caused my heart to blossom.
With the eyes of Venkata,
source of sublime grace,
let us play kannokkam!

Destroying all my accumulated powerful karma
so that I was no longer tormented by it,
my Lord Venkata crowned my head
with his lotus feet, as though I were a mature one.
With the lotus-like eyes of him who revealed his swarupa
even to this blind wretch, let us play kannokkam!

Bringing us under his sway,
he fittingly cast his glance upon us
so that we did not drown in delusion,
looking outwards with a ruinous view
[upon a world] that smiles at us bewitchingly,
only to consign us to the burning pit of hell.
With our attention Selfward turned
so that our hearts may rejoice,
with Venkata, let us play kannokkam!

He joyously brought me under his rule
so that I no longer rejoiced
even through forgetfulness
in the attainments of dharma, artha and ruinous kama.
Adopting the Selfward view
that totally rips apart all the sheaths [kosas]
in such a way that death and birth are no more,
with Venkata, let us play kannokkam!
The scriptures have identified four acceptable goals or ways of life. The first three are dharma, the performance of social duties in an ethical way; artha, the acquisition of wealth through righteous means; and kama, the happiness derived from sensual enjoyment. These three lead to or are transcended by the fourth, which is moksha, liberation.

Through the true vision that sees in such a way that the bond [of chit-jada] is stripped off, he firmly established Self-abidance, the nature of the [infinite] eye, as true jnana. With Venkata, who is the Atma-swarupa, impossible to know objectively, let us play kannokkam, by which we shine as one, merged with him!

Through the clear perception that arose, when he shot the arrow of his glance at the target of my heart, I came under his rule and was immersed [in him]. To shatter totally the confusion that has arisen through ignorance, and cannot be destroyed by any other means, with Venkata, let us play kannokkam!

Like the sweet ripe fruit and its taste, like the song and its tune, inseparably, he merged with me, and took me over through his love. Locking our eyes with his in such a way that the breath and the mind subside more and more through subtle inward enquiry, with Venkata, let us play kannokkam!

Even as he ruled over me, ending my distress, his eyes churned my devotee’s heart
as if it were the ocean of milk, 
furnishing me with the fragrant, fresh butter of liberation 
so that my hunger was ended. 
With the eyes of Ramana, whose wealth is \textit{jnana}, 
let us play \textit{kannokkam}! 

With Arunachala Ramana, 
who revealed to me, his devotee, 
that his grace is the eye, 
who possesses a most comely golden form, 
who is ambrosia to my eyes, 
yet cannot be grasped by thought 
nor described in words, 
let us play \textit{kannokkam}! 

Venkata, with his large majestic eyes, 
in which the magnificence of all the \textit{siddhis} 
that flourish in the space of consciousness 
reside and thrive together, 
rulled over me, entering my Heart 
so that my body and soul disappeared. 
To make the supreme bliss surge forth, 
with him let us play \textit{kannokkam}! 

Venkata of fair Pandi is the trickster 
who first transformed jackals into horses, 
then changed those many strange horses 
back into jackals once more. 
With those eyes that burned black Kama to white ashes 
and transformed this untutored ignoramus 
into the Self, let us play \textit{kannokkam}! 

\textit{Pandi} is the Pandiyan kingdom where Manikkavachagar served as chief minister. Commissioned to buy horses by the king, Manikkavachagar instead used the funds to renovate a temple near where Siva personally
manifested as his Guru. Later, Siva collected wild jackals, turned them into horses and delivered them to Manikkavachagar’s king. Soon after their delivery, Siva caused the horses to revert to their original jackal forms.

Maids with eyes like those of a startled doe!
Like using an elephant,
its temples wet with must,
to trap and snare another one,
we will, through Venkata’s glance,
which is piercing like a sword,
attain the eye of jnana.
Let us therefore look upon his face
and play kannokkam!

Tirukkural, verse 678: ‘Through [one] deed [another] deed is accomplished, just as [one] elephant with temples wet [with the rut] is bound [i.e. trapped] by [another] elephant.’

You who propose to remove the obstacles
to total rejoicing with Venkata,
who brought us skillfully under his sway
by letting his glance fall upon us!
If one bathes fully, the cold is not felt.
Just so, by bathing fully in the Heart,
so that in fright we shiver no more,
with him let us play kannokkam!

Maidens, he who is known to us as our very soul
has put on these words of this devotee,
as a fragrant marital garland.
Holy Venkata has merged with us
and brought us under his rule.
With those eyes of surpassing beauty
let us play kannokkam!
Facets of Self-enquiry

Part One: Meaning and Method of the ‘I-feeling’

N. A. Mohan Rao

A grasp of Self-enquiry is usually best obtained by studying some of the classic books on Bhagavan’s teachings.¹ A consolidated understanding so arrived at has been outlined in the article, ‘Understanding Self-enquiry’, Parts 1 & 2, Mountain Path, July and October, 2010. The present article extends that discussion further.

We had noted that ‘I-feeling’ is the key element in the practice of Self-enquiry. The intuitive meaning of this term is usually considered self-evident,² yet a good number of seekers express serious difficulty

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¹ Notable examples include: doctrinal works by Bhagavan, like *Who am I?, Self-enquiry*, and *Upadesa Saram*; chronicles like *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Day by Day with Bhagavan*, and *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*; and expository works like Godman’s *Be as You Are*, and *Maharshi’s Gospel*.

² For instance, Sadhu Om and David Godman use this term in their *The Path of Sri Ramana* (Part 1, Ch.7, last para), and *Be As You Are* (Ch.5, para 2) respectively, without finding it necessary to explain it.

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in comprehending it. We shall therefore, at first, attempt a full-length explanation of the term in the following pages. We shall then examine the methods for practice of the ‘I-feeling’. In Parts Two and Three of subsequent issues of the journal, we shall see how sadhana along these lines might draw to a conclusion.

The gist of the previous article is given at the outset to refresh the reader’s memory. There is a minor modification in the nomenclature (as at footnote 3), which simplifies the presentation of the concept. Any further clarifications may be sought by reference to that article.

A Recap on ‘Understanding Self-enquiry’

Self-enquiry proceeds in three steps. At first, we put a halt to the existing stream of thoughts and arrive at their root, the ‘I-thought’. The second step calls for investigation of the source of this I-thought. This leads us to a state of abidance in ‘I’, which is the sentient part of the I-thought in its form as ‘I-am-the-body’, etc. During this ‘I-abidance’, some thoughts may occur without disrupting it. They are classed as ‘non-intrusive’. The experience of I-abidance, in the presence or absence of these thoughts, is what comes to be known as the ‘I-feeling’. Our sadhana now consists in holding on to the I-abidance that is fundamental to this ‘I-feeling’, without concern for the presence or absence of the said thoughts. If, during this practice, distractive (i.e., intrusive) thoughts intervene, the I-abidance is lost, and we revert once again to the investigation of the I-thought to regain I-abidance.

As we keep holding to the I-abidance, the weaker and the medium-strength vasanas are eliminated, resulting in a gradual transformation

3 In the earlier article, ‘I-feeling’ was meant to refer to abidance in subject-I alone. We now extend it to include abidance in particularised-I and undifferentiated-I as well. (This, incidentally, accords with Sadhu Om’s usage of the term in The Practice of Sri Ramana). And, we shall not ordinarily label ‘I-feeling’ as ‘impure’ or ‘pure’, since either can change into the other any time during the practice.

4 ‘I’ is āham (or pure-I). ‘I-thought’ is āham-vritti. ‘I-abidance’ is, idiomatically, āham-sphurana (or sphurana); and ‘I-feeling’ is āham-anubhuti (experience of ‘I’). Bhagavan regards ‘I’ as the energy (Sakti) of the Self. Vide ‘Spiritual Instruction’ (Upadesa Manjari), Ch. III, §5, Collected Works, p.67 (2002).
of ‘I’— from subject-I to particularized-I to undifferentiated-I.\(^5\) From the point of view of *sadhana*, it is immaterial to us what these different forms of ‘I’ are. Our concern needs only be to hold onto the I-abidance, whatever be the form the ‘I’ takes at the time. We continue thus until we attain Self-abidance. The Self-abidance being non-dual, there is no further scope for us to expend any effort.\(^6\) These proceedings of step-2 can be summarised graphically thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I-thought} & \rightarrow \text{I-abidance [subject-I} \\
& \rightarrow \text{particularized-I} \\
& \rightarrow \text{undifferentiated-I]} \\
& \rightarrow \text{Self-abidance}
\end{align*}
\]

The third step of Self-enquiry consists in remaining in Self-abidance as long and as often as possible, till all residual *vasanas* are extinguished. Thus, while step-2 leads to Self-abidance, step-3 obtains Liberation.

We may look upon ‘I-abidance’ as the actual happening within and ‘I-feeling’ as the outer experience of it (like an item unpacked and packed respectively). So, when we say ‘I-feeling’, we indirectly refer to I-abidance. In the following, we shall be using such indirect reference to I-abidance wherever it seems to better register with our mind.

**Getting to Know the ‘I-feeling’**

There is often an inadequate appreciation of the nature of ‘I-thought’ and ‘I-feeling’ among many seekers. On account of this, they mistake the ‘I-thought’ to be very well known, and ‘I-feeling’ to be unknown. Actually, it ought to be the other way round.

Let us first take a look at the ‘I-thought’. When a boy answers his teacher’s roll call saying “(I am) present, madam”, by ‘I’ what he means primarily is his body. Apart from this ‘I-am-the-body’ idea, he might also

\(^5\) See ‘Understanding Self-enquiry’, Part 2, *MP*, October 2010, p.15 for the meaning of these terms. The exact manner of occurrence of these transformations could be a little different from the simple scheme presented here. We shall consider those particulars in Part Three.


\(^7\) Alternatively, these transformations may be looked upon as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thought} & \rightarrow \text{Feeling} \\
\text{Duality} & \rightarrow \text{Non-duality/Duality} \\
\text{Contaminated-I (ego)} & \rightarrow \text{Pure-I (‘I’)} \\
\end{align*}
\]
have other ideas such as ‘I-am-so-and-so (by name)’, ‘I-am-a-student-(of-this-class)’ etc. Such multiple identities occur routinely in our everyday life. During the course of a day, a man might think himself to be his body, mind, a husband, a father, a commuter, a colleague, a diner, a citizen, etc. A plurality of such identities, changing from moment to moment, lie in a jumble and make up his I-thought, which falsely operates as his ‘I’, whereas his sense of ‘I’ actually belongs to the sentient part common to all those identities, and is relatively changeless. Thus the ‘I-thought’ is like an imposter, and a ‘black box’, the contents of which the person has no clear knowledge of.

Let us now consider the ‘I-feeling’. For comparison’s sake, let us first take the feeling of anger. Anger may usually manifest externally in the form of harsh words, irritability, minor acts of violence, etc. The manifestations themselves are not anger, since a person could be sitting outwardly calmly in a chair, and yet be seething with anger inside. The question is how do we describe the anger occurring in such a person, so that another who, hypothetically, never knew anger, could understand it? There is perhaps no way. Similar is the case with ‘I-feeling’. If one has, hypothetically speaking, never experienced it, there would be no way to convey its meaning to him. Fortunately, we all have experience of ‘I-feeling’ on many occasions, and so, the best way to understand it is to recollect vividly one of those experiences.

The implicit ‘I-feeling’ occurs briefly at times during a day, but mostly in a weak form, which passes our notice. So, we need to pick an example

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8 Even the I-thought of the form ‘I-am-this-body’ does not represent the same entity all the time, because the body changes from moment to moment, and over the years.
12 We say ‘I-feeling’ is implicit if it occurs in subordination to a thought. It is explicit if it sustains by itself irrespective of any co-existing thoughts. The explicit kind alone counts in Self-enquiry. Ibid, p.12.
where the ‘I-feeling’ is relatively strong. A typical case occurs in ‘brooding’, which practically all of us are familiar with. When a great misfortune befalls us, especially due to our own folly, we brood over it for a long time. Thoughts come endlessly, and we find too they are accompanied by a strong feeling of ‘I’ which we experience as our immediate presence, then and there. We cannot fail to notice it. That experience of ‘I’ is the ‘I-feeling’.

A striking example of explicit ‘I-feeling’ occurs in devotion. Most of us, seekers in jnana-marga, are known to practise daily puja (or prayer), seeking the Guru’s blessings on our sadhana. If we are sincere and regular in our puja, we reach quite high levels of devotion at such times, even if the puja be a short one. When we do namaskara to the Guru with a pure heart, it is implied that we had left behind all contaminants (predicates) of the ego beforehand. Our pure-I then comes to the fore and stands in a one-to-one relation with the Guru. In that ‘bipolar’ state (which represents the state of intense bhakti), all that we need to do to sight our ‘I’ is turn our gaze internally to ‘where we are’ at that juncture. Instantly, we experience the ‘I-feeling’, which is immediate and distinct, in sharp contrast to the I-thought that is distant and non-specific.

13 On the imperative of such prayer to the Guru, see The Technique of Maha Yoga, N.R. Narayana Aiyer, Ch. I.15, p.33, (1996). Since we, as sadhakas in jnana-marga, subscribe to the idea that the world is unreal, we will be deemed to work at cross-purposes if we ask for worldly boons from the Guru.

14 “Prayer when daily offered for spiritual advancement, by itself, becomes tapas.” Ibid, Ch. I-17, p.37.

15 Alternatively we may view it thus: the feeling ‘I-am-the-devotee’, a form of the ego that occurs at such times, is highly sattvic (spiritually charged) as compared to a thought like ‘I-am-a-person’ etc. prevailing in normal times. The space between its predicate and subject is therefore transparent to the intellect, and it suffices for the intellect to merely look in the direction of ‘I’ for instant I-abidance to result.

16 Several devotees who routinely do puja or conventional meditation for long periods report that they go into some kind of a trance, in which they do not know what is happening, and that they become conscious of themselves only after they come out of it. (Bhagavan calls it ‘latent state’ or laya in Talks, §138, p.122). If, such people can, by prior design, break their trance to find within themselves ‘where they are’ at that moment (of breaking), they will be able to realize an intense and intimate kind of ‘I-feeling’ briefly, such as the one described in ‘Understanding Self-enquiry’, Part 2, p.12. See also Talks, §63, p.69.
The novelty of experience of explicit I-feeling at first rouses our curiosity to such an extent that we try to observe it more and more, but this mental activity disrupts and dissipates it. So, our experience lasts only briefly at first. With repetitive practice, the novelty wears down and the experience begins to linger.

Once we come to know the ‘I-feeling’ clearly, we realize that it occurs within us at times during a day in the implicit form. The ‘I-feeling’ is thus within the ambit of experience of all of us without exception. Academically, we might describe it as a feeling or experiencing of our own immediate presence (existence, or being) as ourselves (‘I-am’), here and now. The ‘presence’ is not of any predicative adjunct like the body, but of our innermost sense of ‘I’. It is the ‘I-in-itself’, the so-called noumenon, as discerned by our mind. It is not the Self, but an early manifestation of It, termed ‘pure-I’ by Bhagavan. It is the only thing about us that has not been acquired by us from the outside world, and is ever inherent in us. Elsewhere, the ‘I-feeling’ is referred to variously as ‘I-consciousness’, ‘I-awareness’, ‘I-am-feeling’, ‘I-am-ness’, ‘self-awareness’, ‘being still’, ‘witness consciousness’, etc. It is introversion (antar-mukhata) in the truest sense.

**Methods of Approach for the Practice of ‘I-feeling’**

The method a person chooses for practice of the ‘I-feeling’ would depend on his/her intuitive abilities. Seekers with ‘normal’ levels of intuition are likely to find the term ‘I-feeling’ self-explanatory, or would at most require a little verbal explanation to be able to intuit it directly. When Bhagavan urged us to ‘investigate the source of

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17 It is a contradiction in terms to consider the ‘noumenon’ (subject) as an object of the mind. But it is inevitable, since I-abidance combines the characteristics of both duality and non-duality.

18 See ‘Spiritual Instruction’, op. cit., Chapter II, p.55, where Bhagavan states that the state of ‘being still’ is not an effortless state. It means it is only I-abidance, and not Self-abidance. The term ‘silence’ is at times taken to mean the same as I-abidance (ibid), but more often as Self-abidance. See *Talks*, §122, p.111.

19 One of the main objectives of *sravana*, the first step in *advaitic* practice, may be said to be to bring the student to this level. Cf. *Sri Ramana Darsanam*, Sadhu Natanananda, Scene 1, §3, p.10, (2005).
the I-thought’ in Self-enquiry, he invariably meant that we use this method of *direct* intuition.\(^{20}\)

Seekers who do not feel sure of their intuitive abilities can resort to certain *indirect* methods. These methods rely on taking them into a spiritually charged state in which they can capture the ‘I-feeling’ from close range. If these too, do not suit their preference, they may use what we shall call the ‘*mechanical* methods’. These methods permit them to experience the ‘I-feeling’ even before they know what it is for sure. They come to identify their experience as ‘I-feeling’ by and by. The *indirect* and the *mechanical* methods, too, have Bhagavan’s sanction, as we shall note later.

**Method of Direct Intuition**

This method is so called because, when we investigate the source of the I-thought, we instinctively leave the thought-plane, and directly plunge into the causal in search of our ‘I’. For this purpose, we use a query like “Whence am I?” which is equivalent to asking ourselves, “How do I know that ‘I am’, without using any reasoning that rests on the premise ‘I am’?” Our mind then turns inward, cognizes our ‘I’ within, and abides in it.

When we enter the causal domain, we may not initially, be able to avoid coming up against one or other of the (unseen) *vasanas*. A *vasana*, by its very nature, generates a thought.\(^{21}\) It means we are ricocheted back into the thought-plane. We then repeat our effort to re-enter the causal plane. With practice, we learn to instinctively avoid the *vasanas* and reach our ‘I’, whereupon our intellect finds instant abidance in it. The experience of this I-abidance is inferred by us as ‘I-feeling’.

During our search for ‘I’ in the causal domain, there is no point at which our intellect can take a perch and obtain a glimpse of the ‘I’ before reaching it. The ‘I’ comes to be cognized suddenly, when the intellect reaches it and finds abidance in it. The appearance

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\(^{20}\) Vide *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, Entry of 8-10-1946, p.281, (1989), where Bhagavan, while describing this method, refers to it as the ‘direct method’. See also, *Upadesa Saram*, v.17.

sphurana) of ‘I’ (aham) is thus always ‘spontaneous’, as noted in the former article.\(^{22}\) Bhagavan expects the followers of Self-enquiry to have a prior comprehension of its underlying principles through sravana or self-study.\(^{23}\) Such seekers are expected to be capable of direct intuition. This might explain why Bhagavan never undertook to elaborate on the manner of pursuing the query ‘Whence am I?’ except in very general terms. He takes the stand that the seeker cannot deny that ‘he is’, and so he ought to know where to look within for his ‘I’. Whatever be the method initially followed for ‘I-feeling’, when we gain proficiency in it, we find ourselves switching to direct intuition, since the latter works fastest and comes to us naturally.

**Indirect Methods: Conventional Japa**

Bhagavan has observed, “Those who cannot reach the source of ‘I’ along the path of jnana may reach it by the inward watching of the source of the subtle japa-sound.”\(^ {24}\)

_japa_ is often practised as repetitive utterance of a mantra with concentration. It is best if we have a Guru-given mantra. In its absence, we may adopt one based preferably on the name of our deemed Guru.\(^ {25}\) When we practise the _japa_ regularly for, say, a couple of months, it will tend to go on within us, by itself, almost all the time.\(^ {26}\) We may then use it for practice of the ‘I-feeling’ in the manner taught by Bhagavan to Nayana: “If a mantra is repeated, and attention directed to the source whence the mantra-sound is produced, the

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\(^{22}\) ‘Understanding Self-enquiry’, Part 2, pp.13-14, 18. _Sphurana_ is literally ‘flashing’, ‘throbbing’.

\(^{23}\) “Unless intellectually known how to practise it? Learn it intellectually first …” _Talks_, §40, p.44.

\(^{24}\) Bhagavan’s verse 12 in _The Garland of Guru’s Sayings_ (at v.706). See also _Talks_, §606, p.559.

\(^{25}\) A typical mantra that might appeal to Bhagavan’s followers is ‘[_Om_ Namo Ramanaya’], mentioned by Sri Muruganar in his _Ramana Puranam_ (Tr. Robert Butler et al), v.1-2, p.15, (2008).

\(^{26}\) See, for instance, _The Technique of Maha Yoga_, op. cit., Ch. I.7, p.21.
mind will be absorbed in that.”

In our present context, we may take the term ‘that’ to mean ‘I’. The ego-feeling ‘I-am-the-doer-of-*japa*-(of-the-Guru)’ that reigns when the *japa* runs deep, is very *sattvic* (spiritually charged), and hence, as in the case of *puja* mentioned at footnote 15, it becomes possible for our intellect to sight the ‘I’ at the far end of the causal space, resulting in ‘I-feeling’. If, after a time, the ‘I-feeling’ is lost due to intrusive thoughts, the *japa* starts *automatically*, which saves us from roving distraction. We are thus assured of an efficacious method for regaining the ‘I-feeling’ every time it is lost. With ‘I-feeling’ thus retrieved repetitively, the problem of ‘novelty of experience’ is got over quickly, and the ‘I-feeling’ tends to linger longer each time.

Even when we are actually using direct intuition, when thoughts prove particularly troublesome on a day, we can consider temporarily switching to the method of *japa*.

**Mechanical Methods**

Two of these methods may be identified, namely, *japa* of ‘I’ and proximity of a *jnani*.

1. **Japa of ‘I’**

When we dwell on the ‘I’-thought continuously with concentration, it soon leads us to the ‘I-feeling’. This forms the basis of the method of the *japa* of ‘I’. Bhagavan advises this method to anyone who is capable

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27 Vide *Self-Realization*, B.V. Narasimha Swami, Ch. XV, p.90, (1996). Nayana was an adept in the use of *mantras* (he was called *mantresvara* for this reason), and that is probably why Bhagavan chose to teach him this method in addition to direct intuition.

28 It is often said that *bhakti* is *jnana-mata* (mother of *jnana*), since its prior practice in this or past lives is essential for entry into the *jnana* path. See, for instance, Bhagavan’s reference to *upasana* (*puja*) and *japa* in *Talks*, §374, p.341. The underlying logic may be gleaned from the present examples of *puja* and *japa*.

29 After some practice, the *japa* may at times go on even while we hold the ‘I-feeling’. It will then appear as if we (our ‘I’) have become indistinguishable from the *japa*. See *Talks*, §31, p.39.

30 When a kite flown by a boy is lost behind clouds, he tugs at its string to get it back into view. In the same way, when ‘I’ is lost behind the ‘clouds’ of thoughts, the ‘string’ of *japa* serves to bring it back.
of doing ‘nothing more’. The logic here would seem to be that since the mind is constantly driven to the idea ‘I’, and since an unvarying, intimate ‘I’ that is sought is not furnished by the I-thought (which is like a ‘black box’), the mind is instinctively led to look inside it for the actual ‘I’.

The method consists in doing vocal or mental japa of ‘I’ incessantly. Depending on the seeker’s maturity, it may take a few seconds to several minutes for the ‘I-feeling’ to appear. Even if the seeker is unable to identify it immediately, it will dawn on him in due course that he is actually holding the ‘I-feeling’, and that it has actually been with him for some time. Thereafter he can revert to the japa to regain the ‘I-feeling’ when it is lost.

Bhagavan has said that ‘I’ is the first name of God, and is the greatest of all mantras, even greater than Om. So, the japa of ‘I’ must be the greatest of all japas. An alternative to the japa of ‘I’ is the japa of “Who am I?”. It is understood here that in either case, the seeker utters the japa in the language that he feels most comfortable in.

2. Proximity of a Jnani
A jnani’s presence benefits all people, but the greatest benefit perhaps accrues to the sincere seeker who faces an uphill task in correctly comprehending the meaning of ‘I’ and obtaining I-abidance. Both the problems are instantly solved when the jnani bestows his Grace on him by a look or through silence. The intuitive understanding so gained remains with the seeker, whether or not he continues to be near the sage thereafter.

31 “If you can do nothing more … continue saying ‘I, I’ to yourself mentally all the time, … whatever work you may be doing …” Day by Day with Bhagavan, Entry of 28.6.1946, p.229. See also Entries of 8.5.1946, p.193 and 24.11.1946, p.296.
34 Talks, §72, p.77. See also, The Technique of Maha Yoga, Ch. 1.7, p.22.
35 See, for instance, Talks, §20, p.16; §210, p.177.
For the *practice* of ‘I-feeling’, however, the continued proximity of the sage confers an unparalleled advantage. The mind, which resists introversion at other places, comes within easy control in the environs of a sage, and gets fixed in the Heart. Many devotees of Bhagavan vouchsafe for this fact. As regards seekers who are separated from him by time and space, Bhagavan says that what is important is not the physical proximity of the sage, but mental proximity which transcends time and space. He has given ample testimony to this fact during his time and after.

The proximity to a *jnani* is undoubtedly the most efficacious of all the methods for attaining I-abidance (or Self-abidance). If we do not find it accessible to us, it can only be because we are unable to believe sufficiently that he is very much with us ‘now, here’.

**Identifying the ‘I-feeling’: Some Practical Situations**

Ups and downs are common in *sadhana*. So, at times it may so happen that the ‘I-feeling’ is rather weak. There can then be a little confusion as to whether what we are holding is really ‘I-feeling’ or I-thought. One possible course in such a situation is to merely continue holding what we are holding, *with concentration*. If it happens to be I-thought, it will give rise to the ‘I-feeling’ after a little time, as noted under *japa* of ‘I’.

‘I-feeling’ is such a common occurrence in our life, that it is unthinkable that anyone should be ignorant of it. The real problem with at least some of those who profess their ignorance of ‘I-feeling’ could be lack of understanding, due to which even when they hold the ‘I-feeling’, they confuse it with the I-thought, and try to investigate

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36 Advanced *sadhakas* can even experience Self-abidance. Vide *Talks*, §141, p.123; §54, p.58; *Sri Ramana Darsanam*, op. cit., Scene 6, §21, p.36.

37 Typical examples may be found in *The Technique of Maha Yoga*, op. cit., pp.5-6.

38 *Talks*, §503, p.485; *The Technique of Maha Yoga*, pp.7-8.

39 The *japa* of ‘I’ involves no deliberate attempt at *enquiry* into the source of the I-thought, and so perhaps deserves to be called ‘self-attention’ rather than ‘Self-enquiry’. In practice, however, ‘self-attention’ is taken to be synonymous with Self-enquiry. The *japa* method appears to be simpler than Self-enquiry, but it is far less efficacious, since the entire time spent on *concentration* on ‘I’ passes unproductively, without the *vasanas* being destroyed. Bhagavan’s constant refrain on Self-enquiry may be understood in this light.
its source. Naturally, it will lead them nowhere. A little understanding sets right their problem.

In ultimate analysis, what is important is not which method we use to attain the ‘I-feeling’, but to attain it by whatever means, and hold on to it till we attain Self-abidance. ▲

(To be continued)

Ghost

(On the occasion of Venkataraman’s awakening)

Ana Callan

The boy leaping off a train, racing through the streets, his wind-whipped hair a nest of coal and sapphire is just an apparition;

the rice he almost starves for and then spills, the teeming rain, the thousand angels singing are mere phantoms conjured in our hearts to know what’s real:

the ruby earrings exchanged for water, belongings tossed aside are all illusion guiding us as he was led to the magnetic tide of love swept towards itself –

boy to hill sage to mountain god to guru –

leaving us the one uncompromising signature of truth.
Visitors, seekers from all walks of life came here during Bhagavan’s lifetime on earth and they continue to do so now. Bhagavan is identified with Arunachala; the place is alive, vibrating with His Presence. If anything *sadhana* has become easier now. The attraction to the physical body of a guru may even be a hindrance, preventing the remembrance of the universality of the living inner Guru in the heart. The outer guru is a sort of decoy. That’s why Bhagavan kept on reminding us that he was not the body.

Some visitors, particularly if they were scientists, would ask for proof. We were sitting out in the garden one afternoon with one such scientist who kept on saying that he wanted to know but had no faith and must have proof. His wife had faith and sat there beside him.
patiently, serenely watching him fuming with frustration. She must have been used to such outbursts. He was exasperated and exasperating.

Having reached the outermost periphery of the mind and unable to go beyond it a scientist stands baffled before the mystery of this vast universe into which he has been cast and which he cannot unravel because what he does not understand is himself.

Ultimate Reality has been and can be experienced intuitively by stilling the mind in order to unravel the mystery of being, and of this vast veiled universe. Rationally those experiences of sages of various races widely separated in time and space show surprising uniformity which comes through in trying to give expression to what transcends the mind. Finite vocabulary cannot describe adequately the Infinite, yet unanimity comes through in what they have to say. This in itself is the proof of their validity. For those who have experienced even a glimpse of Reality-Eternity, it is a dead Certainty ‘the surest of the sure’ as Tennyson expressed it.

Science with all the tremendous strides it has made in this century does not reach beyond the confines of the mind so it cannot become a yardstick. Sir Arthur Eddington says: ‘In this world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life’. The achievements of science and technology have brought not happiness to mankind; rather insecurity, violence and fear amidst increasing comfort. We may have almost acquired mastery of speed but without much sense of direction. The progressive interference with nature called progress is bound in the long run to create impoverishment and chaotic conditions.

“It is evident that the teachings embodied in the verses of Genesis are of tremendous importance for the people of the 20th century when we come to realize that science and the rational view of life are products of the function of creative intelligence, the domain of which is the element Fire,” writes Dr. Mees, a writer on symbolism. “Modern man is grappling with a world of ethical problems which have sprung from the creations of his intelligence. The man of this age is the new Prometheus, who has stolen the fire from Heaven in a form much more dangerous than that of the Prometheus of old.
The atom, neutron bombs or weapons are the present form of the fire stolen by man at his own peril.”

When the elements are misused scientific advances result in such monstrosities as napalm bombs, nuclear warheads with thermonuclear devices and so on. The crises that face man are then magnified a thousand-fold by the power of science. The writing on the wall is clear enough. Scientists themselves watch helplessly the increasing power of weapons of destruction, setting the stage for genocide. However, nothing happens by accident or in a haphazard way. The world is not a realm of chaos in spite of man’s efforts to make it so. It is a cosmos in which everything acts with precision and purpose. At every turn one finds safety devices keeping the balance even. There is order and rhythm in the universe. Perfect harmony is the substratum of the present state of violence: apparent chaos, natural disasters, lack of discipline and so on, it is this uncertainty of life, the insecurity which goads us to the search for Certainty for the immortal in us.

By giving prominence to the mind as the weaver of the illusion of matter science is approaching India’s traditional philosophy: Brahman as pure consciousness in Advaita Vedanta. There is only the Self, all else is unreal, an illusion. This is the affirmation of Bhagavan and the enlightened seers. In physical science it is called field-energy or force accepted as the substratum of the world. The frank realisation that it is concerned with a world of shadows is a significant advance of modern science. Yogavasistha: “All things of the world are the one, whole and divisionless Brahman. The one Ether of Consciousness appears as the concrete many of the world without ceasing to be Itself. As the nature of water is not changed by the rise and fall of waves in it, so if the case with the Absolute in spite of creation and destruction of the world....”

Kabir says: “What you think is wakefulness is your dream/This is the truth that can never be doubted/ On whosoever you contemplate, He is ever with you.”

No one has as yet been able rationally to prove or demonstrate that things exist independent of the perceiver’s mind. Where is the world when under an anesthetic or asleep, unless one is dreaming? You may say that it exists for others but you do not say so in your
sleep or under an anesthetic, you yourself must be there to perceive
the others or the one who says so.

Vajrachedika Sutra says, “As stars, a fault of vision, as a lamp, a
mock show, dew drops or a bubble, a dream, a lightning flash or cloud
so should one view as ephemeral what is conditioned.”

Science concerns itself with exploring and unveiling the mysteries
of the outer world using intellect as the highest instrument. The
unveiling or rather the realisation of the mystery of existence, of
Reality is out of its reach as this is possible only when the mind is
still, having returned to its source which is also the All-source of all
existence according to the testimony of sages, mystics and those who
had even only a glimpse of Reality.

Faith, religion, intuition or spiritual insight cover ground which
science cannot explore. The majority of people feel insecure without
faith in God as a living force for guidance in life. We are slaves of
the intellect and thoughts. Spiritually they can be mastered or stilled
and then having reached the very source of thought one knows what
is to be known, one becomes all-knowing by being with an inner
certainty which admits of no doubt. Then the thought machinery
can be used like any other instrument without identifying oneself
with it. Actions and responses are spontaneous, perfect as they
should be in all instances and through the vicissitudes of life which
cease to be vicissitudes. Our true state is unalloyed happiness, far
more than earthly happiness as its acme. Perhaps ecstasy unending
comes nearest to describe it though it is still more than finite
vocabulary could express. Such is the testimony of those who have
realised their true state or have had even only a glimpse of Reality,
having penetrated the veil of illusory appearances which is the world
as we know it.

From Pythagoras to Plotinus we find the same view taken that
the world is illusory. Great philosophers, prophets, poets have in
some way come to the same conclusion. Xenophanes, Parmenides
and Plato asserted that time, motion, space are phantoms of the
imagination — vain deception of the senses, our world a world of
shadows. The greatest exponent of Neo-Platonism, Plotinus asserts
that the external world is nothing else than a mere phantom, a dream, a hallucination pure and simple. Christian philosophers of the early days, the Gnostics expressed the same view. Alghazali, the greatest exponent of the Saracen philosophy, considers our senses fallible: “I said to myself during sleep you give to visions a reality and consistence and you have no suspicion of their untruth. On awaking you are made aware that they were nothing but visions.”

The English mystic poet William Blake writes: “The soul of sweet delight can never be defiled for the essence of the soul is unadulterated Divine Reality. All else is but a dream.”

What assurances have you that all you feel and know when you are awake does actually exist? It is all true in respect to your condition at that moment, but it is nevertheless possible that another condition should present itself which would be to your waking state that which to your awakened state is now your sleep. “So that in respect of the higher condition, your waking is but a sleep.” Jami, a prominent exponent of Sufism echoes this: “I and thou have here no place and are but phantoms, vain and unreal.”

Kant assigns in his Critique of Pure Reason a mental existence to Time, Space and Causality without any objective existence. Herbet Spencer maintains that none of these scientific ideas which are “Time, Space, Matter, Motion, Force and Mind can be proved to have a real existence though they are representative of realities that cannot be comprehended” so that this solid-seeming world which surrounds us vanishes into thin air. (From ‘The ‘First Principles’ and ‘Data of Philosophy’).

The poets write:

“We are such stuff as dreams are made of.” (Shakespeare)

“...He hath awakened from the dream of life./ ‘T is we who lost in stormy visions keep/With phantoms an unprofitable strife...” (Shelley)

“Dreams are true while they last; and do we not live in dreams?” (Tennyson)

“....Blank misgivings of a creature/Moving about in a world not realised.” (Wordsworth)
“....What was, is, and shall be;/Time’s wheel runs back or stops; / Potter and clay endure.” (Robert Browning)

“This so solid-seeming world, after all, is but an image over me and nature with its thousand-fold productions and destinations is but the phantasy of our dreams.” (Carlyle)

The self-evident inference from these unanimous views is the same as from the testimony of mystic experience of saints and sages of different races, traditions and times. According to the *Avadhuta Gita* the poetical overflow in the heart of the ascetic Avadhuta who has realised his primordial, natural, true state, runs:

“Brahma (Atma, the Self) is the innermost essence of all that exists; it is the underlying life of the universe, the one absolute all-pervading energy, boundless as it is infinite, manifesting itself through the variegated phenomena of the universe. All nature is the illusive wonder play of this divine magician, and the visible world is a cipher by which those who have the key may read a secret message; the flowing garb of appearances is but the embroidered veil which clothes ultimate Reality, the goal and resting place of pure intellectual apperception.

“It sings in the throat of the nightingale, smiles in the bed of the violet, shines in the eye of the star, laughs in the golden waves of the field, sports in the fragrance of a flowerbed, roars in the thunderclaps of heavens, whispers in the soft motions of the conscience, rages in the stormy billows of the ocean.... It gives fleetness to the foot of the deer, vigour and fury to the lion, humility to the lamb and keenness of sight to the eagle....”


Aruna,
A Steadfast Devotee

If you were at the Ashram in the final years of the Twentieth Century you might have seen her at Tamil Parayana in the evening—short in stature, gray hair pulled back in a bun, a cloth bag hung on her shoulder carrying annotated notes on Bhagavan’s Tamil works. We all knew her as Aruna. Her dress was old and shapeless, her glasses were large, giving her a scholarly look and she spoke a soft, clipped French accent. A fierce determination shone through her unassuming form and those who knew her recognized a keen intelligence and an inner singleness of purpose that tolerated no obstacles. The twinkling of an eye could transform her from an amused, humble devotee into a fire-breathing dragon.

She was a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan from the 1950’s. She was also a Tamil scholar who studied with Sri Sadhu Om in Tiruvannamalai and a registered nurse who helped care for Sri Muruganar in his final illness. She visited the Ashram for the first
time in 1960 and returned permanently at the age of forty in 1969. She had little money but her fierce determination to settle down at the foot of Arunachala held her in good stead.

Who was this woman? What motivated her to give her life to the Spiritual Quest following the path of Sri Bhagavan at Arunachala? What did she mean to me personally in my spiritual quest?

Arlette Hans was born in France in 1929. She was the only child of a French couple and as a teenager witnessed the complete destruction of her hometown during the Second World War. In a moment of despair on a bridge overlooking a river, she presented God with an ultimatum: Tell me what this life is about or give me leave to check out! Within a week the school librarian handed her a copy of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and told her, “I thought of you when this book arrived.”

That book led her to the feet of her beloved Guru, Swami Siddheswarananda of the Ramakrishna Order, and an ardent devotee of Sri Bhagavan. Many years later she told me, “When I came into the room, he motioned for me to sit down in a chair, but I sat on the floor. He laughed and sat down on the floor too.” In that first interview after she had spilled out her doubts, worries and troubles, the Swami made no comment except to smile and tell her to come back in a week. She remained completely devoted to him for the rest of her life.

The next twenty years were busy ones. While she lived at Swami Siddheswarananda’s Vedanta Center in Gretz, she was sent by him to learn English at Oxford University in England. It was with his blessings that she undertook formal nurse’s training at Edinburgh, Scotland, and worked as a nurse-midwife with the Eskimos at the North Pole. Swami Siddheswarananda left his mortal body in 1957. In 1960 Arlette visited Ramanasramam for the first time. Both her parents had died by the end of the 1960’s and it was then that Arlette realized that she belonged to Arunachala. Swami Siddheswarananda had after all given her the name Aruna many years before and told her that she would understand its significance later in life. Her first visit to Arunachala had filled her with a nameless dread and when she moved back there permanently life was not easy. The Ashram was not the modern
busy centre that we see today. There was no supermarket across the street, no water filter in the dining hall, no modern accommodations for the visitor and, worse, many who had flocked to the Ashram in the Maharshi’s declining years seemed to have forgotten his very existence. Accommodations of any kind were not easy for an attractive single Western woman, and adjusting to the climate was an enormous challenge in itself. Finding a niche for herself and her skills, and a daily routine in the Ramana community took time.

She began to find her way though. The writings of Sri Bhagavan in Tamil fascinated her and she began to associate with the great Tamil scholar Sri Sadhu Om. Bhagavan’s most ardent devotee, the great Tamil poet and saint, Muruganar, was available to devotees and Aruna was able to sit at his feet and absorb Sri Bhagavan’s teachings. In time she would come to nurse him in his final illness. Eventually, with the help of a resident sadhu with a background in engineering, she had a house, Summa, built about three kilometers west of the Ashram on the pradakshina road. She laid out a garden, acquired a motor scooter and shuttled back and forth to the Ashram. In later years she assisted Professor Swaminathan when he began translating Sri Muruganar’s *Garland of Guru’s Sayings*.

I had the good fortune to meet Aruna for the first time in January of 1988 at the Ashram bookstall, where she introduced herself to me. I was new to the Ashram and to India and her warmth and kindness were a great personal boon. I remember, as if it were yesterday, stopping by Summa on a sunny South Indian afternoon as I did pradakshina. The first to greet me as I approached the green iron fence was her little dog Putzi. There were numerous cups of tea and a tour of her garden and stories of Swami Siddheswarananda and his kindness toward her. This was but the first of many visits and meals and stories shared. In those first happy years of our friendship she taught my daughter and niece how to tie a sari, told stories of her family’s resistance to the German invasion of France, cooked French food for my aged mother when she visited the Ashram, gave me advice on my own wardrobe and told many stories of Bhagavan, his devotees and Ashram life.
One afternoon as we wandered in her garden, peering into the well and checking the progress of her vegetables and flowers she told me the story of her fierce friend, the porcupine. “You must always be careful of what you ask of Arunachala,” she said. “When I was a girl in France during the war, times were hard and we had to depend on our vegetable garden. At first, small animals came and ate our vegetables but then a porcupine moved in and we lost far fewer vegetables. We came to look on this fierce little animal as our friend and our next-door neighbour was so intrigued that he even painted a picture of it. I had not thought of my friend the porcupine in many years but then something began to eat my vegetables here at Arunachala. One day I looked at the Mountain and asked, ‘Where is my little porcupine now?’ Several days later there was a package for me in the mail and a letter from my old neighbour. He explained that he was old and moving out of his house, and he had decided to send me the portrait of the porcupine that he had painted so many years before.”

As Aruna grew old her health began to fail, and she had a couple of accidents on her motorbike but none of this affected her intense devotion to Sri Bhagavan and her dedication to her Tamil studies. She unfailingly sang Tamil Parayana in the evening at Sri Bhagavan’s Samadhi. Poor eyesight, due to macular degeneration and failed cataract surgery hindered her work translating ‘Forty Verses on Reality’ (Ulladu Narpadu), and ‘The Essence of Instruction’ (Upadesa Saram) but with the help of a powerful magnifying glass she carried on.

The last time I saw her was in August of 1997. By then her health was so poor she had moved into an apartment across the road from the Ashram. I had typed up her translation, introduction and commentary on ‘Forty Verses on Reality’ and had it bound as a book for her. I am not a scholar but on that visit we pored together over her Tamil to French translations, which she was now translating into English.

She prepared several meals for me and there were many cups of tea. She spoke of growing up in wartime France and her life in Tiruvannamalai, how difficult it had been for her when she came as a single woman to stay permanently in 1969. In her wry way she always managed to fill me in on all the Ashram news too. It was clear that
she didn’t feel well. She complained that her kidneys weren’t working right, and it was painful to watch her bend over her magnifying glass as she tried to decipher her notes. When I tried to suggest that it might be time to surrender her scholarly pursuits to something less demanding she strenuously objected.

When it was time for us to say our good-byes and for me to return to the US she took a bundle out of her cloth bag and pressed it into my hands. “I want you to take this with you.” It was her translation of Ulladu Narpadu into English, and the initial work of Upadesa Undiyar. I was appalled and objected strenuously because I knew how precious these were to her, but she insisted. “They’ll be safe with you,” she said. Did she know that time was running out for her?

The end came mercifully quick for her on March 25th, 1999. She suffered a heart attack in the sunrise hour of morning. As a trained nurse she knew it was serious; unable to move she called out to her neighbours through a window to get help. The neighbours were forced to enter the house through a broken window. They made her as comfortable as possible. Before medical help could arrive, her body gradually became cold from the extremities. The neighbours began to chant Aksharamanamalai as she slowly was detached from her physical body. Without a struggle and fully conscious, she peacefully left this world. She was indeed blessed.

When I got the news it was hard for me to believe that she was gone. To others she may have been a staunch unswerving devotee of Sri Bhagavan, an ardent Tamil scholar and a faithful member of the Ashram community. To me she was much more. She was a personal example of perseverance in the face of difficulties, an explicator of the Master’s teachings, a provider of comfort-food in a bewildering welter of wonderful, unfamiliar Tamilian fare, a source of stories, personal and cosmic. When I came back to the Ashram in those first ten years I knew she would be there to smooth my path. She was my friend.
It was the opening day of the academic year and Lekha walked down the corridors of her college. Her colleagues, the other teachers, often wore new saris to create a focus of conversation, and she sometimes went along with it to avoid drawing attention to herself by differing. But today she had no need of textiles to produce a high. The familiar tingle of anticipation and fear hit her — something she always felt when about to face that unknown quantity, a new class. Not that she was very new to this any longer, being already ten years into the profession. In staff rooms she concealed her pleasure in the task of teaching as well as she could — passion was unfashionable. But when she entered the space of the classroom and was behind her table, concealment was impossible and unnecessary. Staff members sometimes protested against the ridiculous and inappropriate title Sharada Bhanu retired last year from the English Department of Stella Maris College, Chennai. She has written a novel and some short stories for children. She has been a devotee of Bhagavan since 1977.
of Lecturer: Assistant Professor would have matched their ideas of dignity better. Lekha kept her disagreement to herself — it was speaking she enjoyed.

It was the last period of the day and a value education class. It was the first time that she would be taking the first year students for this subject and she was still unsure of what she would say. The students were supposed to be learning personality development, and she had tentatively considered one or two approaches as an introduction but was unsatisfied with her ideas.

“How did you start them off, Nanditha?” she had asked the previous teacher of this subject that morning. “First day? Oh, I never teach on the first day. I just make them introduce themselves — you know how these kids take ages to come out even with their names and schools. By the time I have taken attendance and they’ve finished, thankfully time’s up.”

Lekha knew that was how most of them started. She offered no comments, but for herself, hated the procedure. While you waited for some stammering nincompoop almost sick with terror to answer, a slow murmur would rise from the back row. Then you had one of two worthless choices. You could check the rising tide every now and then, or you could ignore it and be swallowed up in the noise. Moreover, the first one or two classes, in her experience, were crucial in determining the relationship between teacher and students. If she risked a loss of tension, they might decide they could fool around for the rest of the term.

Lekha hated students talking to each other in her class. She believed the teacher who endured it suffered a fatal erosion of power and loss of respect. If the price she had to pay to ensure their silence was to keep speaking, she had long ago decided it was acceptable.

But today she was uneasy with the lecture she had prepared and inclined to try something else. Personality — a question of identity. Why had she never taught any class about Bhagavan’s teachings? In the beginning she had decided it was out of the question — her classes held students of different religions and preaching might be resented. But she felt no such qualms when she presented Taoist or
Sufi thought. No, the real reason was probably that it was too close to her — Bhagavan mattered too much. This idea offered no comfort. If He mattered and His teachings were the One Reality, why did she make no effort to pass it on?

She had reached the class and, with it, a decision. She would do as her colleagues did, for once. Every student would introduce herself. She would ask them to stand up and say who they were. Really.

The class was a mixed group drawn from different arts disciplines and she had no idea who belonged to it, so attendance would have to be entered later. She was annoyed when she walked through the door to note that the room held no more than fifteen students. There should be at least three times that number in their seats. Where were they? Of course, these girls knew nothing.

She waited a few minutes and then started. They could each get up and say who they were.

They started quite readily. Lekha reflected that they had probably been doing just that during the first four hours of the day.

A confident girl, obviously used to taking the lead, started. “I am Poorna Rajagopal from Vidyodaya School and I took …”

“Just a minute. You say you are Poorna Rajagopal? But is that you? Isn’t that just your name?”

“Yes, Ma’am. But I thought you wanted us to give our names?”

“I want you to introduce yourself. To say who you are. While you are thinking that out, the girl on your right, yes you, can go on. Who are you?”

This one, plainly nervous said, “I am Mythili…”

“You heard what I told Poorna? What if your parents had decided to call you something else? Would you be another person or the same?”

“The same, Ma’am. I think.”

“Then tell me who you really are. Yes, those of you at the door can come in. Please take your places in silence. Yes, Mythili.”

“Ma’am, then shall I just say something about myself? I’m 17 years old and I play badminton…”

“Is that who you really are? A 17-year old badminton player? What happens when you turn 18? And supposing you fracture a leg and can’t play any more. Will you be someone else?”
The girls were looking at one another nervously, as if the well-worn tables and chairs in the room had suddenly begun to dance. What had happened to the tried and trusted introduction?

A rather determined girl with a heavy build got up at the back of the room. “Ma’am, we don’t exactly know what you want us to say.”

“Haven’t I explained? Say who you really are. Really. You can think a bit and then start again. Yes, those of you hovering in the corridor can come in. Any reason why you are fifteen minutes late?” If they had, they kept it to themselves.

The class began again. From a graceful girl in a headscarf, “I am Asya, I am five feet six inches, my parents hail from Maharashtra…”

“Okay, that’s your body. What if you grow another inch? There’s a boring ad on TV for a health drink, promising parents that their offspring will reach for the skies. Supposing it works? And supposing you had got adopted by a Punjabi couple, would you be someone else?” Lekha was enjoying herself.

“Well, I would be different.”

“How?”

“I would speak Punjabi!”

The girls had got excited, suddenly. They were volunteering comments. “Well, you could learn Punjabi now. You would still be the same person. Just a Punjabi-knowing Asya.”

“Ma’am, I’m fond of dogs. That’s really me. And I lose my temper pretty frequently. That’s my defect.”

“Those are personality traits. But supposing you lived on an island with no dogs? Or people? Would you still have those traits? For goodness sake, you at the door come in.” This was maddening. The class was actually working up into a nice state of excitement only to have it dissipated every now and then with these interruptions. It took the whole class five minutes each time to settle down and Lekha had to explain all over again to the latecomers. Normally she would have refused admission after ten minutes but these were freshers, and they would probably wander around like this for at least a week, disoriented and timid.

A quiet, rather studious-looking girl got up to say, “Ma’am, according to science we are determined partly by genes and partly by environment.”
“Forget science. Who are you? When you relate to yourself, do you say to yourself, ‘Oh, I am gene plus environment, that’s who I am’? Do you know who you are or no?”

“Ma’am, I always thought I did, but now I think I don’t.”

“Ma’am, if I am not my body or name or qualities, I really don’t know. You tell us, then who are we?”

“Good heavens, if you don’t know who you are, how can my information be of any use? Surely you are not suffering from amnesia? Well, of course not. You have never gone around asking anyone ‘Who am I?’ have you? It is you who have to give an answer. For those of you who have just come in, an atrocious thirty minutes late, we are asking ourselves a question – Who am I? Try to answer.”

The class buzzed with excitement. Some were resentful, most bewildered, but all were thinking. Lekha tried to prevent the latecomers from entirely ruining the mood, though she was seething. “I should have done this next class,” she thought. Then dismissed the idea. She never wasted time. It was not in her nature to while away an hour.

And then just as she felt the question was going home and that without a single mention of Ramana’s name or any preaching at all, the most useful class she had ever taught was in progress, a girl drifted in. Obviously she did not believe in hanging about in the corridor, trying to catch a lecturer’s eye.

Lekha looked at her incredulously. “May I know how you are entering this class forty minutes late? Or why you are bothering to put in an appearance at all? It is nearly time for the bell.”

The girl looked a little taken aback but showed no signs of dropping dead, which would have been what Lekha would have liked at that moment. Moreover, she had an excuse ready: the announcement on the public address system regarding the room had been inaudible. They were all new. They didn’t know which notice board had the room numbers put up. She had had to search for this room.

Lekha tried to control her rage. “Very well, since you are finally here, perhaps you can answer a question we are all trying to cope with. Who are you, really?”
The class settled back with pleasure. They could now relax and watch this stranger go through the bewilderment and embarrassment. Fun. And much easier than answering the question.

The girl gazed at her warily. “You want me to give my name?”

“Please state who you are really are. Have you got that? The real you.”

The girl said calmly, “I am not my name or my body or my parents or my past or my country. I am not even my personality.”

The class listened in wrath and amazement. “Hey, if you’re not any of these, then who are you, huh?”

“I am me. Just me. I am. I am here. I am aware. That’s it.” The girl looked at Lekha. There was a moment of electric contact. The bell rang. And everyone left the class.

“It’s happened before,” Lekha thought numbly. But how? When? Not to her, that she knew. Who was this incredible girl? “And with my usual brilliance, I have forgotten to ask her name. Well, I deserved that.”

She mentioned the incident to no one. It was too humiliating. The next class she searched eagerly for the girl’s face. She wasn’t there. She asked the others. “Oh, do you mean Ranjini, Ma’am. She’s left. Discontinued.”

She checked with colleagues. “That tall dark girl? She decided we were not good enough for her and has left for the U.S., I hear. Conceited kid. Good riddance.”

Lekha was disconsolate. “I should have spoken to her after the class. Told her how much I appreciated her answer.” The thought that by her irritation she might have contributed to the girl’s decision to leave was painful.

Swami Rama. He was warned by his guru that one should never assume that everyone in an audience is at a lower level of evolution than oneself. She should have remembered that.

Adi Sankara. He once met a child. Deaf and dumb, people thought. He wasn’t. Perhaps he had been waiting for the right question, the right moment and his Master. When Sankara asked him the conventional “Who are you?” he had replied, “I am Being, I am Consciousness.” Sankara gave him the name of Hasthamalaka, ‘the one to whom the Self is as clear as a gooseberry on the palm of one’s hand,’ and took him as disciple.
Well, she too had met Hasthamalaka, but the berry had rolled off her palm.

Weeks passed. She could now meet the class without remembering the elusive Ranjini. And then one day she entered the classroom and as she reached automatically for her attendance register, all words died away. Who were these girls? Not Poorna, Susan, Mythili, Asya…This was Bhagavan, listening. Every one of them. And someone was now going to speak. But who was that? And as she stared at them all, there was no way she could break the silence. A murmur rose from somewhere and then like a wave it passed through the whole class. A gasp shook Lekha and suddenly the class and she were laughing…

A Hillside Lesson

Cheenu Srinivasan

I travelled to my native land
With no expectations or plans in hand
But only family and friends in mind
And a few visits, music and books to find.

My wife and I an exception did make
To a holy place for our souls’ sake
The travel hours our senses strained
We finally arrived expectant and drained.

A hillside trek to a holy abode
On blistered feet I bravely strode
Pain caressed by His eternal presence
I reflected over His teaching’s essence.

Inside the sage’s cottage on this hill
Is where perhaps His time stood still
Oh what solace this to my mind brings
Bereft of material and worldly things!

My musings broken by a hawker’s call
I’m beckoned towards a hillside stall
Not just an elephant-god for cash I got
A lesson in contentment was also taught.
The Biology of Enlightenment

Unpublished Conversations of U.G. Krishnamurti After He Came Into The Natural State (1967-71)

Edited & with an Introduction by Mukunda Rao


Soon after his coming into the natural state, in the month of August 1967, UG openly talked of the biological changes he had undergone with friends and whoever was curious and cared to listen. The present collection is a record of some of these conversations he had with friends from 1967 to 71, in Saanen, Paris, Italy and India

Introduction

One day, during a discussion in Madras in 1953, J. Krishnamurti started discussing the subject of death. From the year 1947

Mukunda Rao lives in Bangalore. He has published a number of novels, short stories and plays. He edited the Penguin UG Krishnamurti Reader and wrote The Other Side of Belief: Interpreting UG Krishnamurti.
U.G. Krishnamurti had been listening to JK’s talks and had even engaged him in personal discussions on a few occasions. He was there in the room that day, listening to JK talk on a subject on which he himself had, as a lecturer of the Theosophical Society, given talks not long ago. Towards the end of the discussion, JK, in his usual style, hammered the question what is death again and again. UG did not know what happened, but the mind slowed down and he said to himself rather loudly, ‘Apart from all the discussions I have heard and my own so-called experience of death in the area of experiencing, apart from all these, I really….’ And then he stopped and could not complete the sentence. He slumped back as an overwhelming fear of death seized him. He gasped for breath and felt as if ‘a vacuum pump was sucking the life out of me,’ and then he felt invaded by an overpowering current of energy. At the time somebody threw a question at JK and the discussion continued, but now UG was sort of cut off from it. After an hour or so he walked out of the hall, feeling completely out of this world. It was a tremendous experience and, by his own admission, from then on his perception of things underwent a radical change.

Eventually, this ‘near-death experience’ was to lead him up to the ‘final death’ and awakening into the Natural State in 1967. It seems, the near-death experience is, almost as a rule, a necessary prelude to enlightenment. This seems to have been the pattern in the lives of sages. However, at the time, UG brushed it aside as of no importance and thought that it would fade away over a period of time. But the experience did not fade away; it altered his being, and like fire kept burning for the next fourteen years, bringing on tremendous physical changes and experiences before culminating in the death of the experiencing structure, the self.

Years before, in 1963, while UG was staying at Ramakrishna Mission in London, he had experienced the first stirring or awakening of Kundalini or Serpent Power. And then over the next three years, from 1964-67, there had been clear signs of the approaching changes. For instance, if he rubbed his palms, or any part of his body, there used to be a sparkle, like a phosphorous glow. And when he rolled on his bed with unbearable pain in his head, again there would be sparks. The body had become an electromagnetic field. And he had started
But the mind is always seeking new experiences. UG: The mind is put together by these experiences. What is there inside is nothing but the bundle of all these experiences and you want to add more and more to it. That will not destroy the thought structure, only strengthen it. And what I am saying is that to understand this structure is not to destroy it but to put it in its proper place.

Unfortunately that structure has taken possession of you and is controlling your whole way of life. It is the life of thought, of the mind, not life.

You are the movement of life and you have no way of knowing that movement. The thought structure which is a dead thing cannot look at a living thing. Any experience is a dead experience. No experience is new, all your experiences are in terms of the old experiences.

Even the so-called new knowledge becomes a part of the old knowledge. That is why I object to the use of the words like love, God, truth, reality, peace, beatitude and immensity. May be there is such a
state as immensity and sometimes you are tempted to use that word, but the moment you use that word that state is gone, but if you let this state remain without naming it, without calling it love or bliss or God, the whole of your being is immersed in that—whatever that is. It is a living thing. Here, one may describe the state but the next moment it is forgotten, gone, and so the description may have some validity.

Paul: *Yesterday you said you cannot look at or speak about this state.*

UG: There are no words, yet, I am all the time communicating, direct and straight, in a clear and unmistakable language that state so that in the light of what I am describing you can see the illusion, you can see for yourself that what you are seeking has no relationship whatsoever with this state. That is the purpose of my talking.

You’ll also be in this state when you stop translating this or comparing or projecting it in terms of your past knowledge and experience. And you’ll know the silence that is always there.

Paul: *Meditation is silence, isn’t it?*

UG: That is not what I mean. When one is in this state of silence, this silence which is not of the mind, is going to affect you. Here, the whole of your being is silent. It is the silence of the universe flowing through this instrument (body).

In your case, you don’t stay for long in this silence, because there is a movement in this silence and you translate it as this and that and so you never come in real touch with this silence.

Paul: *When you are silent, words jump about and sometimes you are helpless.*

UG: You see, you are experiencing silence which is not the real thing, because the experience is always there and so it has no value.

What then has value? When I see what I am doing, would I continue to do it? When I see this meditative state is no different from all other experiences, of what importance is this indulgence in meditation?

Here, the meditative state is a way of life (although I don’t want to put it that way). This is always in a meditative state. This is not the result of practice in meditation, this is different and at a different level altogether. It is the tremendous silence of the body, the whole organism, not of the mind.
See, what happens when you meditate is that the thought slows down, the mind becomes dull and that many translate it as an extraordinary experience.

Paul: *No, when I am in meditation there is nothing that comes to disturb or hurt me. But in your case, you say, you are always in a state of meditation.*

UG: But you must know that this is not an extension of what you think is the meditative state. This has no relationship whatsoever with what you call meditation. That is why sometimes I have to use negative words and say this is not this or that or what you are thinking. Then, naturally, the question will be what is it then? It is like the sea, a fact (not in the sense the scientists use the word), it is there, untouched, of and by itself. And you have no way of understanding the whole thing.

Paul: *Yes, the mind cannot understand, so what shall I do? I go out of it and not do anything?*

UG: (Laughs) In any case you’ll continue to do what you are doing and I am not saying you should alter or change. But, you see, you may acquire half-a-dozen more beliefs, increase the fund of your knowledge, but the structure has not changed. So you should stop adding things further. The very nature of the mind is to add more and more, that is the art of its survival. And that is the way it has come into being, by putting together all these experiences. That way even the so-called religious experience becomes a part of this experiencing structure. All that is a barrier.

Paul: *So I should not do anything, not gather more knowledge, more experiences.*

UG: What makes you think you’ll not do anything? You are projecting a state of being and you think you’ll come to it by not doing anything. It doesn’t happen that way.

No. First you’ll have to see that your search is not different from other things or what others are doing, and see that it is an escape from what is there. If you at least see the illusion of it all then it loses the grip over you.

The idea or search for ultimate reality prevents you from facing the reality that is there now. So when such a goal drops away you
are stuck with yourself. This suffering is the reality. No matter what you do you cannot escape it. When you see that there is nothing you can do about it, you stop.

To see the tricks of the mind to survive, to see the illusion of absolute reality, absolute virtues, to see the horror inside of you is to start the loosening process. Then there is a possibility.

Paul: *You are saying that it has to begin in the mental process itself.*

UG: You have to see what this instrument is doing, this is the only instrument you have and there is no other instrument and you have to discover the way it functions, see that the whole thing is an illusion.

Paul: *Then there will be the unity of life.*

UG: It is not what you think. The questioner must come to an end. The questioner is the question. If the mirror is not there then you are everything that is there. The separateness has gone.

When the wind is blowing or the rain is falling, since there is nobody experiencing the wind or the rainfall, there is no separateness. The only awareness I have is I am the rain. Not that I say that to myself. Although the body is resisting the flow of the wind, the awareness that is there inside of me is the wind.

Paul: *You are made of what the Buddhists call as ‘emptiness’!*

UG: No, this body is solid (laughs). There is an awareness of the wind. It is not like saying I am the wind, the rain, the tree, I am Brahman, *Brahmasmi*—these are all words. These words never come there. But in order to communicate what that state of awareness is I am using these words.

It is like this. I look at the water, like a camera the eyes are focusing on it, whether it is blue or brown or red or whatever I don’t know—when you ask I’ll tell you it is blue, but I never tell myself it is blue or that it is even water—because there is no thinker here, there is no separateness from that. The object is the subject here—it sounds very philosophical, but to me it is an actuality. There is no subject; the thinking-feeling subject is what you call consciousness.

The subject is not there, the object is the only thing for me. I don’t exist independent of that. The ‘I’ comes into being only when
the memory comes in. When the word ‘sea’ comes the ‘I’ comes, but when the word is not there, what is there then?

When things are not separate from you there is no space. Object is the subject. The woman I am looking at is myself, so I can’t have sex, I can’t make love to myself, you understand. There is no building up process here. This is not a mystical concept, this is a pure and simple physiological state. There is only perception, no perceiver. If you translate this into mystical or philosophical terms, it is not my concern. This is unitary awareness; the inside and the outside are the same.

Paul: You talked of vibrations in the body. I want to understand what that is.

UG: You see, there is this man who chants Lalithasaranama every morning. I was listening. Those sounds, vibrations fill my whole being; it originates from inside here, as it were. At the same time a dog started barking and the barking sound too filled my being. And I was wondering if the dog was chanting. So you see, there is no mind, no choice, no translation taking place here, this is a physical state. All these sounds or noises, whether a holy man chanting, or a dog barking, originate inside of me. What can I do? (Laughs)

Paul: We have to be honest with ourselves.

UG: You have to be ruthlessly honest with yourself. It’s not an easy thing. And you’ll find out that this mental structure, which you thought is very efficient, cannot deal with this.

Paul: What you are saying goes against psychoanalysis.

UG: Yes, quite the opposite. A psychiatrist who met me recently said that I was knocking off the very foundation on which they have built the whole structure. As long as you deal with the mind so long is there the need for psychiatry. Here there is no mind, leave alone the unconscious and the subconscious and all that.

The unconscious has had its origin in the amoeba itself; it all began there. The thought is there in the animal. Animals and birds don’t use words but produce sounds and that is thought. But we have evolved to a certain extent where we learn and use words, we translate images into words. The image is knocked off here, not words, and these words
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don’t produce the image. There are only words: Wife, daughter, tape recorder, chair, man, woman—they don’t produce images here. That is why I say semantics and linguistics and all that have no meaning. And you must know that it is not only the word-structure that is part of thinking, but there is also the cellular structure. The nervous system has a thinking process and memory of its own.

Paul: I have never seen so clearly before the illusions about observing our own thought process, our past. Doing that implies that there is an observer which is given continuity. But that is not the way to live.

UG: Why do you say it is not the way? That’s what you are doing and will continue to do.

Paul: Why do you say that?

UG: The observer is still there, you have not seen the end of it.

Paul: No.

UG: You’ll continue to do that, tomorrow you’ll adopt another approach, another method, hoping it’ll all come to an end. Every time it starts you’ll tell yourself you’ll stop doing this and it never stops.

Paul: So believing that I can see the origin of thought…

UG: Or cannot see the origin of thought—both are same. All this is part of the same structure. Leave it alone and let it function in its own way. What does it matter how the thought originated. The thought is there. So I don’t try to find its origin, don’t manipulate it, don’t find the meaning of that or understand it, I leave it alone.

You see, what is happening now. You are listening and inwardly you are thinking what to do with all this. Listening is also thinking. As long as you translate my words into a meaningful structure, the listener, the thinker is there.

Paul: We always translate things in our own way. It is a fact.

UG: It is a fact and not a fact. When you find out for yourself you’ll know that this is not the way you function. There are only thoughts, no thinker. You don’t have to accept what I am saying or Descartes is saying. You have to find out for yourself what this whole business is all about. That means you should brush aside both the statements and also brush aside all your experiences that confirm these things. And then the whole process, the whole movement of thought comes to a stop, not end, then you’ll find out.
Paul: *You said there is a movement inside of you which is not related to any dimension, and yet, you also say there is no space for you. How is that?*

UG: Movement is from point A to point B, the distance and the time it takes for me to travel from A to B. This is in terms of time, distance and space. When there is no space, no time, no distance here then there is absolutely no movement of the thought structure. But what you are doing is like moving from A to B, this way you want to understand the thinking process. That is a wrong process. There is nothing you can do about it. Full stop. Period. You don’t know if it’ll come to an end or not come to an end.

What I am saying is not the absence of thought. The thought will be there. But it has become a part of the movement of life. Thought is never separate or have an independent existence. In you the thought has a parallel movement with the movement of life.

Paul: *Animals don’t extract time and the notion of the ‘I’ through comparison. There is no feeling of ‘I’ and time there.*

UG: It is difficult to understand animals. You see, man is a highly evolved product. But the human instincts have not been given an opportunity to develop. What I mean is not the instinctual wisdom that people talk of. These are all intellectual concepts.

As I see it the human animal has to flower into a human being. And this can happen only when the animal content of the brain is quiet or becomes quiet through the process of evolution. But the process of evolution is retarded or delayed because of the culture, because of our anxiety to shape man according to a pattern, a model, or an idea or belief. So something has to be done, but then we continue to live the life of ideas of the mind and hence it is very difficult to grasp this.

Paul: *You say, like in my case and like in the case of everyone else, there is memory in you too, so what’s the difference here?*

UG: Yes, but that memory is not influencing my action, my life; it plays its part where it is necessary. Memory is necessary and as long as you are living and the brain is functioning there is bound to be memory, otherwise it means you are a corpse or the brain is damaged.
Paul: *But you use your memory, right?*

UG: To function in this world.

Paul: *But it doesn’t bring in the time or bring in the ‘me’.*

UG: No. ‘Me’ or the ‘I’ cannot stay here, because of the complete change in the physiological structure inside, so the cells are also functioning differently.

In your case the cells are formidable and they don’t want to change. *You* don’t want to change. You want continuity and that is the mind. A collection of such individuals is a collection of nations and a collection of nations is the world and it doesn’t want to change. Continuity and change are two opposing things. Here there is a change every moment. Every moment you are different to me. You are changing every moment and if I have to draw or paint a picture of you, I’ll have to do it again and again.

Paul: *It is the moment that does not exist in time and space!*

UG: That’s what I am saying. So how can I catch you and put you on the canvas. No particular moment is important; rather, every moment is important because there is nothing here that holds on to a particular moment.

This is not a mental state. This is not an experience at all. It is not beyond the mind; it is just not of the mind. The senses function that way, moment to moment and there is no interpreter there. This is a physiological phenomenon and so it is physically impossible for me to live in any other way except from moment to moment.

My interest is only to make you see how the thought structure is functioning and why it cannot understand anything that is not a part of it. So the yogi and the commissar are the same because both are the products of the mind.

To be what you are is the thing. But you don’t know what you are and you are always trying to be something else. That is the problem. But when the search comes to an end what is there is what it is. And that will destroy the structure to the very marrow of your bones and you as ‘you’ will be finished. And you will know that there is no self, no soul, no beyond, nothing. There’ll be just living from moment to moment and this is a pure and simple physical and physiological thing.
“O pure-minded saints! Come, listen to the greatest story of all times! While Vithoba and Rukmabai were living happily in the forest, Sidhopant, having expended all his resources, faced the worst of privation. Anxious of the children’s upkeep, he sought the help of friends, and whatever he could collect from them, he brought home. Himself going hungry often and feeling ashamed to approach the same friends again for help, he took the begging bowl to new houses.

To relieve the sufferings of his grandfather and uplift the souls who were engulfed by samsara, Jnaneshwar, who was none other than Sri Hari, started accompanying Sidhopant on his rounds of bhiksha. Beholding the charming and innocent child, respectable folks of the village reproached Sidhopant for exposing the small child to this...
scorching heat. While on the rounds one day, adoring the child and kissing his cheeks, they piled up food and other gifts in Sidhopant’s hands. Unable to carry the heap by himself, Sidhopant rested in front of a house. Volunteering to carry half of the load, Jnaneshwar tied the materials in his upper cloth and put it on his head. As the load was too much for the child, he stumbled and dropped the bundle on the ground and the items scattered all over. Overcome by fear that his grandfather would be annoyed with him, he hurried to gather them together. Hungry and angry at having wasted the food, the grandfather rushed forward to knock him on the head with his fist. Jnaneshwar started running away from the scene, looking behind often to check if Sidhopant was closing in on him. As a result he lost his speed and was caught by his grandfather. Exhaustion, hunger and frustration made Sidhopant furious, and scolding the child soundly, he gave him a good whack on his back. Jnaneshwar started sobbing loudly.

The celestial beings who were watching the scene in great wonder broke out in adoration, “O Hari, Narayana, lotus-eyed, green-hued Lord, O Krishna, Janardana, Reliever of Earth’s burden, Destroyer of Ravana, what amazing sport is this? How is it that You who could not be captured by Dantavaktra in Krishnavatara were overtaken by this old man? Is this tottering man mightier than Dantavaktra? How is it that You who killed the mighty demon of Hiranyaksha became helpless in the hold of this frail old man and received his thrashing? How did you lose all your strength with which You held the Govardhan aloft on your little finger? And this small bundle of grains became too heavy for You! Why these copious tears? Were You too badly wounded by Bhishma’s arrows? Or did the Gopikas hit You, the pain of which has made You weep thus? Perhaps, the secret is that You have become powerless before Your beloved Bhakta? Or is weeping an affliction of Kali Yuga?”

Pleased with the praise of gods, Jnaneshwar apologized to Sidhopant and placated him with these words, “O grandfather, I will not cause you trouble hereafter. Please bear with my omission.” The passersby also admonished Sidhopant for beating the child. Then taking the help of a head-loader to carry the bundles, Sidhopant and Jnaneshwar reached home.
Once there was a feast given by a Brahmin in the village. Sidhopant, along with his wife and grandchildren, took his place in a corner in the row of guests who were being fed. On seeing the children, the host flew into a rage and warned, “How dare you bring these outcaste children here and pollute us? Unless you send away these wicked little monsters, you will not be permitted amongst us Brahmins.” With these harsh words, the Brahmin dragged the children by hand and pushed them out. Incensed by the pitiless behaviour, Jnaneshwar, in spite of his brother Nivritti restraining him, ran back and sat next to Sidhopant. The Brahmins joined together and condemned Sidhopant in one voice for the pollution. Sidhopant also became irate and threw the ceremonial utensils at the Brahmins. Now all the Brahmins, falling upon him, assaulted him physically.

At this, Jnaneshwar said in a regal voice, “O so-called Brahmins, scriptures declare that only he who has realized Brahman is a true Brahmin. By that definition, you all must be ashamed of calling yourself Brahmins. He alone who repays with kindness the evil done to him is a Brahmin. By what standard can you who have insulted and assaulted an old and helpless man be called Brahmins? Now, I won’t let you get away with it.”

With a roar, Jnaneshwar picked up a log and got ready to attack them. The Brahmins growing haughtier also picked up similar logs of wood and approached Jnaneshwar with the intention of killing him. Restraining their advance, Nivritti said, “O noble Brahmins, you are all learned scholars. You alleviate the sufferings of the poor and helpless. One should not even abuse verbally the old and the children. How have you stooped to attacking them physically? Being Brahmins, why have you taken to such evil ways?”

These words, instead of subduing the situation, only inflamed the gathering even further. Thinking that these children, if allowed to have their way, would pose a bigger challenge in future, the Brahmins advanced threateningly towards the brothers. Some started pelting stones, some clubbed them with sticks. Grinding his teeth, spewing forth offensive words, just like a lion in the midst of a herd of elephants, or like Hanuman amongst the demons, or a tiger rushing into the flock
of sheep, Jnaneshwar charged into the crowd and wielded his stick so skillfully that some lost their lives, some their limbs. Some fled for their life, some begged for mercy. In an instant, he made the place into a battlefield, himself emerging as the undisputed victor.

However, Nivritti was not happy with the turn of events. Pacifying his brother, he reminded him of the purpose of their incarnation. He exhorted, “Knowing full well that unrighteousness is the way of life in Kali Yuga, why did you lose your temper? It is better to keep our powers under check until the appropriate hour.” Jnaneshwar calmed down and after restoring life to the dead Brahmans and reviving their grandfather, all of them returned home.

In the meantime, those Brahmans who had fled the scene complained to the king, showing the wounds sustained by them in the conflict. The king became angry with Sidhopant and his grandchildren for assaulting the revered Brahmans. He dispatched his soldiers to bring them to the court forthwith. The king’s men, reaching Sidhopant’s house, ordered the family to follow them to the court. Jnaneshwar said, “My grandfather has been badly wounded by the Brahmans. As my brother is attending on him, he is not free. I will follow you to the king’s assembly.”

As he reached the court, he enquired of the king, “Why have you summoned me here?”

The demeanour and the speech of Jnaneshwar displeased the king. He asked the reason for their attack on the Brahmans.

Jnaneshwar replied, “O King, you are the protector of justice of the land, you are the custodian of righteousness, you are the guardian of your citizens. It is your duty to enquire from both sides before arriving at a judgment. Is it fair on the part of Brahmans to attack small children and an old helpless man? Is it what they have learnt from the scriptures? If you find us guilty after proper enquiry, we are ready to accept whatever punishment you impose on us. If the sovereign of the land rushes to judge before analyzing the situation, what can we helpless people do? Can a commoner oppose the king? Who can teach justice to the king, discrimination to the wise, wise counsel to the minister, or chastity to a woman? Can an unrighteous
king, unwise minister, unchaste woman, and a slandering Brahmin ever uplift themselves?”

Taken aback by these words of Jnaneshwar, the king asked the Brahmins for an explanation. They briefed the king about Vithoba’s Sannyas, his return to the household and begetting four children. They avowed that as such conduct is forbidden in the sastras, they had been ostracized and therefore not allowed to sit with the Brahmins in the feast.

Jnanadev cited the example of great Rishis like Agasthya, who were renunciates while being grihasthas. He added, “Moreover, it is in obedience to his Guru’s command that my father came to live with the family. Are not Brahmajnanis beyond the barriers of caste, creed, etc.? If caste restrictions are to be observed, then how is it that Vasishta married Arundhati, who was brought up by a cobbler, and sage Vyasa, born to a fisherwoman, Valmiki, a hunter, and Narada, who ate the leftover food of his fisherman-Guru, were not ostracized? These Brahmins of Alankavati who are scholars in scriptures have indulged in faulty reasoning.”

“O King, my father went to Varanasi in quest of the highest Knowledge and was initiated into sannyas by Sripada Swami, and in obedience to his Guru, he resumed grihasthashram. How can he then be held guilty of breach of dharma? Only the wicked and unrighteous have to be expelled from society, not Brahmajnanis! Great sages like Vasishta have proclaimed that it is the character of a person which upholds a man as noble or otherwise and not the caste. Now, O King, you may pass your judgement.”

In great appreciation, the king hugged the child and said, “O dear child, you are an embodiment of uprightness and auspiciousness. You have uttered verily the sacred words of the Vedas, even at this tender age. In a few years from now, who will be able to match your scholarship? Even one thousand Brahmin scholars will not be able to face you! O minister, please arrange for the other children to be brought here in palanquins.”

When the family reached the court, after according them due honour, the king delighted himself by drinking their nectarine words.
He felt greatly fortunate to have such noble souls reside in his country and elevate its merit and status. He gifted to them clothes, gold and other finer articles. Then addressing the Brahmins of Alandi, he said, “O noblemen, please accept these pure souls in your feast. By this act, you will be eradicating my *karma*, purifying me and gratifying me, as the king is responsible for the lapses of his citizens. Get rid of your prejudice and hatred. This is my prayer to you. Please accept a gift of one thousand gold coins and bless me.”

Since they could not defy the king, the Brahmins pretended to accept his decision. However, they returned to the king next day and said, “O King, our high priest and other scholars who are the appropriate authority on scriptural injunctions and practices live in Paitanapuram. Will your majesty be pleased to send these four children along with their parents to consult them on expiatory acts and return with a certificate of purity from them?”

The king sent word to Sidhopant to bring the noble parents of the four children to the royal court. Sidhopant, on reaching the forest, informed Vithoba of the good turn of events brought about by the children and how the king was pleased with children and also of the royal invitation. Vithoba scoffed at this and said, “A sadhu entering the kingdom leaving his solitude behind will be trapped in the spell of Kali Yuga, don’t you know this? Moreover, what need has a mendicant for royal favours? Please leave me alone and take the children back with you to the country.” With these decisive words, he lost himself in meditation. Jnaneshwar chose to stay back with his brothers and accordingly conveyed to Sidhopant that he would bring his father back in four days. The children spent their time merrily with the parents.
The following is the continuation of chapter two of the Arunachala Purana, the first part of which appeared in the previous issue of Mountain Path. The chapter tells of how Lord Siva appeared as an unfathomable column of fire, in order to quell the pride of Brahma and Visnu. At this point in the story, Visnu has already seen the error of his ways, learned humility, and returned to his starting point to pay homage to Lord Siva. Brahma however is determined not to be bested by his rival Visnu, and when he sees a screwpine flower that has fallen many aeons ago from the crown of the Lord, he asks it to back him up and join him in a conspiracy to delude Visnu into believing that he has actually reached the Lord’s crown and returned. Brahma continues his address to the screwpine flower…

Robert Butler devotes his time to the translation of Tamil classical and spiritual texts. He has recently published a grammatical commentary on Ulladu Narpadu, and a translation of the biography of Manikkavacakgar. These are available for online preview, purchase or download at the following link: http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=1212666.
139. ‘Do not call this deceit and despise me. It is permissible to tell the greatest falsehoods in order to save the lives of those who suffer. These are not unworthy words which one should fear to speak. Those who prize their friends will agree even to drink poison for their sake.

140. Screwpine flower, you who live upon the head of Him whose forehead bears a third eye! There is no need to give this any further thought,’ he said, and the screwpine flower assented and went along with him. Dropping swiftly down from the heavens, he came into the presence of Lord Visnu, he whose strides measured the earth.

141. ‘Bearer of Laksmi, hear the exploits which brought me here! Travelling a hundred thousand leagues in a mere instant, I perceived the head of the Primal Lord, and returned,’ he claimed, and the screwpine flower attested that it was so.

142. At that precise moment, the mountain of fire exploded. The gods and rakshasas fainted away at the sound of the detonation. The elephants of the eight directions vomited blood, believing that the Sun itself had melted. Then in the midst of that scene, eclipsing the ruddy glow in the sky, making even the beautiful flower of the murukku tree look soiled, the Three-Eyed One rose up, his radiant red form all covered in white ash, with a smile on his lips like the one he wore when he burned up the three cities of the Asuras.

143. ‘Lotus-born Brahma, you have spoken out of sheer arrogance. A fine thing indeed!’ said the Lord, and began to laugh, whereupon this world and all the worlds beyond trembled and grew dim. The radiance of all the heavenly bodies faded. Clouds disappeared from the sky. All that was fair and beautiful perished, and all that was worthless flourished and grew. The eight directions were twisted from their stations, and vast forests of trees were blackened, scorched and burned.
144. The gods were fearful, thinking, ‘Ayan has been destroyed!’ and poured down a vast rain of flowers, as if the earth had been dug hollow. But joy blossomed in the heart of tall Mal as the black stain of arrogance departed from lotus-born Brahma.

145. Realisation dawned upon fair-eyed Mal. He sang and offered up prayers. He danced in a transport of joy, running hither and thither. Becoming a worthy devotee of the immeasurable First One, he wondered to himself what boon he might ask of Lord Siva.

146. Seeing how the heart of Hari melted with devotion for him, the Lord graciously granted him many a boon. Then turning to Brahma, ‘You who dwell upon a fragrant lotus-blossom, all your temples and all worship of you will vanish from this earth,’ he commanded.

147. ‘Screwpine flower, for joining Brahma in this deception, I shall never more touch you again.’ Thus did he decree. Brahma himself, distraught on observing the depths of the Lord’s fury, fell at his feet, prostrating his body upon the ground and offering praises.

148. ‘You whose form is like fire, smeared with white ashes! Since my soul has been foully shrouded by the loathsome cloak of *anava malam*¹, I wander helpless here. How am I, a mean wretch, of any significance? Fair One! Heaven’s infinite sphere! You who are the Four Vedas, and more than that, the Vedas’ ultimate import! Peerless First One! Let your anger against me cease! Let it cease!

149. If the seven oceans, into which all the earth’s waters flow, were mixed together and heated up, would there be any other water to cool them down? And if your anger remains at such a pitch, how will life here be able to survive? You who in former times drank the poison from the Milk Ocean! Let your anger against me cease! Let it cease!

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¹.*anava malam* is the principle of egoity inherent in the unenlightened soul or *jiva*, which, in the Saiva Siddhanta system of belief, prevents it from recognising that god alone is the source of all its actions.
150. Crescent Moon! Moon at the full! You who appear in female form! And again, as a man! Honeyed One! Fragrant blossom! Great mountain! Divine grace! Munificent cloud! Melodious sound! These are among the myriad forms in which you manifest yourself. Is this just? Over and over again I beg you, let your anger cease! Let your anger cease!

151. I am not the hunter Kama with his bow and flowery arrows which sting! I am not that raging elephant with curving tusks, its temples streaming with the juices of the rut! I am not that red hot fire, nor death-dealing Yama! Nor am I the three cities of the Asuras! Do not deem me worthy of your anger!

152. The moment I conceived the idea of reaching your unknowable summit, I assumed the form of a bird. Must I go on suffering further? Show your compassion to one who has been disgraced!’ These words he spoke, and the Lord, who is like a warm fire to those who suffer in the cold, joyfully replied:

153. ‘Lotus-born Brahma, be no longer afraid!’ That puja performed by Brahmins upon the earth will henceforth be your puja. And you may continue to ordain the seven worlds which are supported upon golden Mount Meru.’ Such was the decree of that gracious Ocean of Compassion, who swallowed the poison from the conch-strewn sea.

154. Since I have granted you both such boons in this holy place, may it flourish, to a distance of three yojanas all around, as the pure and sacred dwelling place of divine knowledge. This great column of flame, assuming a lesser form, shall become a mountain with the power to grant boons. That mountain, which unfailingly confers the bliss of glorious final liberation, shall be known as Arunaipuri.

155. I ended the suffering of Indra and the other gods, the moment that, in their affliction, they turned their thoughts to me. Therefore I shall abolish the suffering of birth and death for those who fix their thoughts on this holy place. This mountain and this sthala shall possess
the quality of being indestructible, even at the universe’s ending, and the winds from it shall blow in all directions bringing final liberation to all beings, animate or inanimate.

156. Desiring to confer sweet salvation upon those of the earth who have performed arduous penance, we shall grant them the boon of birth in this fair and holy city. Here a single offering will be increased in worth a thousand fold. Wickedness and sin will not prosper here. For those who doubt, there will be no salvation. For such is my command.’

157. When the Lord had finished speaking, that pillar of fire shrank and became a mountain. When holy Mal and Ayan saw how it shone out spreading its beautiful rays far and wide, they made obeisance to the Lord and said, ‘It is not possible for the gods and ourselves to approach and gaze upon its brilliance. Let it be a simple mountain, concealing within itself all those countless fiery rays.’

158. ‘Immaculate Lord, conceal this beauteous light and make of it a mountain like all others,’ cried He whose vehicle is a swan, and He whose vehicle is Garuda. Whereupon the Lord made of it a mountain like all others. And when those two devotees said, ‘May you gracefully grant that each day a bright light be seen upon its summit,’ the Lord in his compassion spoke these words:

159. ‘In the month of Karttikai when the moon is in the constellation of Krittika I shall mount a bright beacon upon the summit of that mountain. They who see that most excellent light will endure and prosper upon the earth, free of disease and hunger. The obstacles confronting kings and great ascetics will be removed. We shall grant the boon of liberation to the kin of those who have praised or gazed upon it down to the twenty-first generation.

160. This mountain shall have the power to cure the affliction of birth and death. Therefore one of its names shall be Medicine Mountain. Since it is red in colour, Red Mountain will also be one of its
names. For those upon the earth who recite its name but once, it will be as if they had pronounced the Five Holy Syllables, [Namasivaya], thirty million times.’ On hearing the pronouncement of the Lord whose throat is black with poison, Brahma and Visnu were filled with joy. Bowing down to him, they began to speak:

161. ‘Red Mountain Lord, except for the rains that fall from the sky, who will be able to approach you and bathe you with water? Who, apart from the starry constellations, will be able to place about your holy neck a garland of pearls? You whose throat poison adorns, who will there be to show a bright lamp before you, other than the Sun with his rays? Accordingly we beseech you to manifest yourself in the form of a lingam at the foot of that mountain, that we may make obeisance and perform puja to you.’

162. ‘Then such shall I become. May you worship according to the precepts of the Kamika Agama’ said the Lord, withdrawing into the mountain. And so a Siva lingam manifested there, whose praises are sung in every land. Seeing this, they bowed down in worship, pouring down a dense rain of flowers, and dancing for joy in transports of bliss. Then they summoned Mayan who saw to the construction of gopurams, halls, and great walls, without equal anywhere.

163. He built a rich and deathless city, with three hundred and sixty holy tanks, and made it beautiful. In its wells flowed the heavenly river whose waters never fail, and in its groves grew the celestial trees of Svarga. Gods and rishis in unending succession took birth there, and the courtesans of heaven incarnated there as dancing girls with eyes as black as the poison halabala.

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2 Puja in the Arunachaleswara temple is always performed according to rule laid down in this Saiva Agama.
3 Mayan is one of the Danavas, who served the Devas and Asuras as their architect and builder.
164. Rising in the morning and bathing, Brahma and Visnu put on clothing of bark, matted their reddened hair, covered their bodies in holy ash, put on necklaces of rudraksha beads and performed Siva puja with ritual bathing, much sandalwood paste and garlands of flowers. Then they performed pradakshina of Annamalai, devotedly praising him until fourteen thousand years had passed, whereupon they assumed their divine forms once more.

165. Once its construction was complete, holy Arunai’s city became so desirable that even the Lord’s affection for Mount Kailash faded away. Since here was a mountain of pure gold, of what value was a mountain of silver only? The seven holy sites with Kasi at their head, whose glory is widely praised, and the golden realm of the gods all lost their allure, just as the stars lose their radiance as the pure rays of the Sun appear.

166. Though it is hard indeed to tell of the qualities of a mountain whose measure even Brahma and Visnu could not know, I have tried in a small way to describe it insofar as my knowledge permits. Is there anything further I might need to speak of?, said Nandi. At that, the rishi Markandeya, feeling greatly honoured, bowed down in worship and said, ‘May you show us your grace and recount to us the tale of how Uma appeared from the [Himalaya] mountain and merged with the left side of Lord Siva as his consort.’ Whereupon Nandi began to speak…

(To be continued)

Author of more than fifty books, Ramana devotee Dhiruben Patel has perfected her craft in this short award-winning novel about a sannyasin who returns to his family in Mumbai after long years living as a renunciate in the ashram of his guru. Rainbow at Noon concerns itself with the life of Ishan and contrasts the worldviews of ordinary middle-class life in contemporary Bombay with the ascetic discipline and life of simplicity as engendered in traditional ashram life. While this depiction of an ashramite at large confronts us with the perennial call to that which lies beyond the material world, underscoring, among other things, the profound social changes underway in modern India, more importantly it offers a revealing psychological portrait of a man on the journey toward self-mastery. Rainbow at Noon in its original Gujarati won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award. This English edition is translated by Raj Supe. — S. Kumar


This is an unusual book. It is a record of a social anthropologist’s perception of Sri Ramana Maharshi, his teaching, Sri Ramanasramam, its environment and the pilgrim town Tiruvannamalai. It is also rather autobiographical, but the author sounds very impersonal when she talks about herself – her Christian background and secular outlook, her cerebral stroke triggered by an allergy, her multiple sclerosis, domestic crisis, her deep attachment to her three lovely daughters, how Sri Ramana came to her in a dream, her visit to the Ashram, her recovery.
Susan quotes profusely from the works of social scientists and there is a generous use of jargon but she never seems pedantic for she is such a gifted writer. She is a rare combination of a social scientist, academic, novelist and a poet. Her prose is exquisite, often poetic.

In the opening chapter Susan refers briefly to Sri Ramana and the state of Being and says that she need not have worked for six years on the book for she senses now that that state can come upon you easily, gracefully, unobtrusively, non-intrusively. She is not sure that she is an anthropologist any more. What she calls Ramanine ‘theology’, for want of a better word, has opened new inner vistas for her.

Susan writes in limpid, lilting prose about the ‘Children of Nature’, of Lord Arunachaleswara, who is the fusion of Siva and Sakti: the peacocks, monkeys, squirrels, snakes, cows in the Ashram; the workers, priests and other resident and non-resident sadhaka-devotees, the devotees engaged in environmental and humanitarian work around it, about the holy hill Arunachala, the crowds, full of laughter and love, on special days circumambulating it, the mendicants, magicians and jugglers, vendors of sweets, music, fruits and cereals on the route. She also writes about how around the changeless, timeless holy hill, the town Tiruvannamalai is ever changing, for the better and for the worse.

Men and women, whom no other book on Sri Ramana is likely to mention, are discussed at length in this book. The author is an anthropologist and her primary concern is the *anthropos* (man) though, here, in his relation to the divine. From the known, or at least knowable anthropos, she seeks to move on to have a glimpse of *theos* (God — read Self or Ramana). Susan copiously and judiciously quotes from the writings of old devotees, who knew Sri Ramana, and lets them speak in their authentic voices of their Master, aptly adding her own highly perceptive comments.

Susan says that she is always happy at the Ashram. She first came for rest and recovery. She recovered and the healing seems to become deeper and deeper. She had her own death experience. That brought her to Sri Ramana, the Cosmic Healer.

This book is sure to delight social scientists, lovers of Sri Ramana and everyone who looks for excellent writing.

— S. Atreya
This book, *An Exposition of the Teachings of the Taittiriyopanisad*, is by the famous Advaitin, Vidyaranya (14th c.) who is well-known for his book, *Pancadasi*. Among numerous other works, he also wrote an anthology of commentaries upon twelve *Upanishads* entitled *Anubhutiprakasah* (The Exposition on Direct Self-Realization) of which this text forms the second chapter. It is a concise independent commentary on the *Taittiriyopanisad*. While most classical commentators wrote glosses on the works of Adi Sankaracarya (in this case, a gloss on Sankara's commentary on the *Taittiriyopanisad*), this is uniquely an independent interpretation of that *Upanisad*. In 150 verses in the form of couplets, Vidyaranya has summarized primarily the second section of the *Taittiriya*, adding a few verses from the first and third sections. The second section begins, “The knower of *Brahman* attains the Highest.” Like virtually all *Upanisads*, the *Taittiriyasa* declares the unity of the Self (*Atman*) with *Brahman* in two ways, i.e., by negation (not-this, not-this) and by identity statements (*mahavakya*), both of which converge in the thunderous declaration, “The knower of *Brahman* is *Brahman*.” This little book elucidates the doctrine of *maya*, an enquiry into the five sheaths, the five elements, the five vital airs, and the mind, all of which emanate from the cave of the supreme sky, the Heart, *Brahman*. The book is pure Advaita philosophy and well worth reading.

— John Grimes
“In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmological philosophy of the Gita, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma, and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water-jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges’.

These powerful influences permeated Thoreau’s main writings and his life of achievement as naturalist, poet, ecologist, politician and chief exemplar of the principles of Independent Self Determination. In seven chapters Bharadwaj outlines the influence of the sanatana dharma on the West; and then on to Thoreau’s Transcendentalism, followed by Thoreau seen as a karmayogin, jnanayogin and Hindu aesthetic. Although there have been very many studies of Thoreau since his death, none has ever pursued this aspect of his character and literary work in such detail and with such diligence.

The book is an enjoyable and fascinating read for all those who are interested in this great man, whose writings were a major influence on Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, the Kennedy brothers and others in the Civil Disobedience Movement. — Alan Jacobs.
(The Reviewer is currently compiling a major anthology of Thoreau’s Poetry and Writings for Watkins Publishing to be released in 2011)


In Zen: Ancient and Modern, Fr. AMA Samy, a Jesuit priest and Zen teacher, discourses on the spiritual path from the Zen perspective and draws on his long years of experience as a Catholic priest. The book consists of a collection of talks, presumably to his Zen students.
(though the context of their delivery is never stated) and an assortment of articles from recent years. Barring editorial omissions, the book reads well and is replete with sound advice for authentic spiritual living. The author pairs in a convincing way Zen’s rich literary tradition with that of Catholic theology and spirituality, sprinkling in anecdotes from his own life and that of contemporary seekers from India, Japan and the West.

The author valorizes Zen’s Bodhisattva vow, (‘Though the many beings are numberless, I vow to save them!’) and Zen’s emphasis on compassionate action, which he likens to the Christian practice of charity/love. Who are you? What are you seeking?, the author asks, and, who are you endeavouring to become in this search? Is your journey just for yourself or does your spirituality compel you to be of some help to others? Taking distance from teachings that privilege personal realization over any concern for the well-being of the other, the author goes an extra step: realization of the Self and compassion for others are irreconcilably bound up with one another. He writes:

“Compassion is the realization of non-duality and the actualization of enlightenment. It is in losing ourselves in the ‘passing over’ into the other that we find ourselves. This ‘horizontal’ passing over and coming back takes place in the field of, and by virtue of, the ‘vertical’ passing over into Absolute Nothingness.” (p.111)

The book goes on to challenge the reader with a wide range of human concerns, underscoring the knottiness of everyday living and the challenges one faces in the pursuit of excellence. As a seeker one is urged to watch oneself at every turn and continually to question one’s true intentions. What motivates us, for example, when we turn a cold shoulder on a friend rather than going to them directly to reveal our hurt? Might our snubbing be born out of pride, indignation, and stubbornness rather than any genuine aim at justice? How can we develop the sympathy sufficient to allow ourselves to vocalize our misgivings in a compassionate way?

It is not enough, says the author, to use meditation and spiritual practice as a vehicle of escape, a ‘by-pass’, as it were, from the vexations, disappointments and trials that come with daily living. Rather, true Zen practice, the author avers, is the art of cultivating the awareness and strength of character that will be required when trying moments arrive in the course of daily life, as they invariably will, in order that we can respond appropriately, in a manner fitting of a true follower of the dharma.

— MH
Mahapuja
The Mahapuja of Sri Matrubhuteswara was observed in the Mother’s shrine on Thursday 26th May, 2011.

On the 26th in the early morning there was Mahanyasam followed at 7:30 by Ekadasa Rudram, Abhisheham and the Special Puja at the Mother’s Shrine. At 11am Deeparadhana was performed.

On the evening of the 25th the RMCL Bangalore presented a Bharatanatyam performance entitled Matrubhuteswara by Kum. Revathi Sankar and in the New Hall, and, on the evening of the 26th, a ballet ‘I am I’ (Paripoorna Ramana) was performed by artists of RMCL led by Dr. Ambika Kameshwar in the Old Dining Hall.

Major Chadwick’s Samadhi Day
Major Chadwick was a ripe soul when at 7 a.m. on November 1, 1935 he came to Bhagavan in whom he recognized his Guru. Bhagavan later said of him: “Chadwick was with us before, he was one of us. He had some desire to be born in the West and that he has now fulfilled.”

Major A.W. Chadwick was absorbed in his Master Bhagavan Ramana on 17th April 1962. Chadwick Day was observed this year on the same day when at 10 a.m. devotees assembled near his samadhi, decorated with colourful garlands, and chanted Arunachala Aksharamanamaalai. Prasad was then distributed.

Maha Nirvana
The anniversary of Sri Bhagavan’s Brahma Nirvana is usually celebrated on Chaitra Krishna Paksha Trayodasi (April-May) reckoning the day according to the Souramana (solar) system of the Hindu calendar. In recent times it is also observed according to the Gregorian calendar, that is, on 14th April, 8.47 pm, the moment Bhagavan left His body.

The Shri Ramana Seva Sangha, Kumta, Uttara Kannada, observed the 61st Aradhana on the 30th April. This group of devotee's long history of devotion to Bhagavan is an exampe to us all.

Ramana Granthalaya Update
Work continues on the new Ashram library. On May 2nd a ceremony for the pouring of concrete for the ceiling of the new building was performed. The newly adjusted target date for completion is April 2012.
The foundation is in place and the ground floor supporting structures are nearing completion. Complete with courtyard, the complex is designed to house the Ashram library collection of some 30,000 volumes as well as serve as a space for cultural events.

**Bhimavaram Inauguration**

Four years ago Sri Lingeswara Rao established, in the presence of Sri V.S. Ramanan, a shrine for *Ramaneswara Mahalingam, Matrubhuteswara lingam* and a *Sri Chakra Meru* in his native town Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh. On Sunday, 22\textsuperscript{nd} May, 2011, a bronze statue of Sri Bhagavan was installed strictly according to Agama principles. The occasion was inaugurated by Sri V.S.Ramanan with Sri Nanagaru of Jinnur and other spiritual dignitaries in attendance. After the installation, *puja* was performed to Bhagavan’s statue with sixteen different forms of service (*shodasa upacharas*). During *sahasra nama puja*, garlands of one lakh *rudraksha* beads procured from Kasi were offered to Sri Bhagavan which were later distributed to devotees as *prasad*. More than a thousand visitors from far and near Bhimavaram witnessed the auspicious event, which was a memorable event in the lives of many. A sumptuous *prasadam* was served to all.

Earlier on Friday the 20\textsuperscript{th}, the image was taken in procession in the town. In the end it was placed by the pedestal to be installed later. Suddenly, dark cumulus clouds filled the sky and strong gales of wind followed by a brief shower cooled down the hot summer afternoon – a clear token of Bhagavan’s grace. The next day, *chandi homam* was performed to invoke the divine Mother’s grace for the removal of obstacles and grant success. On Monday the 23\textsuperscript{rd}, *sri chakra puja* was performed in gratitude to the divine Mother. Thus the whole event turned out to be an unforgettable one filling all the spiritual aspirants with devotion.

Bhimavaram in the West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh is a town comparable in size to Tiruvannamalai. For an inexplicable reason, it has been endowed with the gracious glance of Bhagavan. It is not only rich in culture and wealth, but also in the number of people dedicated to Sri Ramana.

A devotee had a miraculous dream that a shrine should be built in Bhimavaram and due to the grace of Bhagavan it was constructed after six long
years. Dr. D. Visvanatha Raju and Srimati Kamala, both ardent devotees of Sri Bhagavan who came forward to sponsor the bronze statue.

On the 30th April, 2008, two Siva lingas: Sri Ramaneswara (in emerald), Sri Matrubhuteswara (in quartz) and a 9 inch tall Sri Chakra Maha Meru were installed as per the Agamic tradition.

After the efforts of the first three years, a young sthapathi of great talent was identified quite near Bhimavaram. Rajkumar Vudayar by name, he is endowed with all the qualities for sculpting divine personalities. But all the sincere efforts of the sthapathi were in vain in achieving for the proposed murti, a fitting resemblance to Bhagavan’s facial features, especially the eyes. Sri T.V. Chandramouli of Sri Ramanasramam strongly recommended the sthapathi to visit the ashram in Tiruvannamalai and receive Sri Bhagavan’s grace. Rajkumar wasted no time in obeying the devotee’s suggestion. The bounty of grace bestowed upon him by the silent action of the Master was revealed in a matter of two weeks. The image came out full of life and reality. The eyes radiated compassion and knowledge. Everyone was so full of joy.

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**Ashram Online Book Store**

The new service was launched on the 26th May, Mahapuja Day. Devotees in India can now order books from the ashram using the Internet.

The list of books and their prices can be found on the ashram website at [www.sriramanamaharshi.org/bookstallsales/](http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/bookstallsales/)

The courier and the handling charges will be calculated automatically according to the weight and the destination address.

Payment can be made through a credit card online.

After payment the books order will be delivered as soon as possible.